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**Designing the last days : Edward Irving, the Albury Circle, and the theology of The Morning Watch.**

Patterson, Mark Rayburn

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Thesis by

Rev. Mark Rayburn Patterson

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# Designing the Last Days



Edward Irving,  
The Albury Circle, and the  
Theology of  
*The Morning Watch*

By  
The Rev. Mark Rayburn Patterson

Submitted to King's College, London  
in fulfillment of the degree of PhD

11 January 2001



## Thesis Abstract

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This thesis is an examination of *The Morning Watch*, a theological journal published in London in the early nineteenth century. Arising in the wake of The French Revolution, *The Morning Watch* was at the center of burgeoning interest in eschatological speculation and scholarly exposition upon the prophetic Scriptures. In 1826 Henry Drummond, MP, invited a coterie of leading prophecy scholars, including Edward Irving, London's most famous preacher, to his Albury Manor to study the biblical prophecies, discern their nonpareil revelation, and correlate this message to the events of their own day. In March of 1829, the Albury Circle began publishing *The Morning Watch* for the dissemination of prophetic revelation. This thesis provides an analysis of the journal's content, to determine the *a priori* and thus determining assumptions of the Albury Circle, their hermeneutical and theological methodology, and the combined effect these bore on shaping doctrine and practice. The contents of the journal reveal that Albury's assumptions and labour were determined wholly by the premise of an imminent Second Advent. Understood as the center and message of the Bible and the goal of creation—evidenced in the precise progression of historical accidents, the Circle endeavoured to correlate the two through a literal-typical hermeneutic. The fusing of this hermeneutic, to a doctrine of historicist revelation, allowed Scripture and history to form a single grand narrative which alone revealed the divine intendment and its temporal manifestation. The interpretive, dogmatic, and kerygmatic tasks combined, as the Circle sought to demonstrate the prophetic witness, create a systematic theology around this new center, and proclaim these truths to a faithless age. But instead of reviving church and culture, Albury's assumptions and methodology led to the reinterpretation of Christian doctrine, redefinition of faith, and an assessment their own day and lives entirely shaped by their teleological expectations.



For  
*Linda Lee*

הַנֶּדֶד יָפָה רַעֲיוֹתַי הַנֶּדֶד יָפָה

Song of Songs



# Table of Contents

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Thesis Abstract.....	2
Acknowledgments .....	9
References to <i>The Morning Watch</i> .....	13

## Introduction

The Vantage of <i>The Morning Watch</i> .....	15
1. <i>Headwaters of the Premillennial Stream</i> .....	15
2. <i>The Approach of this Study</i> .....	21

## Chapter One

The Rising Voice of Prophecy and the Founding of the <i>Morning Watch</i> .....	25
1. <i>The Contours of Romantic Apocalypticism</i> .....	25
a) Apocalypticism and Millennialism .....	25
b) The Worldview of Premillennial Apocalypticism .....	27
c) The Epistemology of Romantic Apocalypticism .....	30
d) Pre-Albury Premillennialism .....	34
2. <i>The Rising Voice of Prophecy</i> .....	44
a) Prophecy's Rosetta Stone: The French Revolution .....	44
b) Prophecy and Professional Exegetes .....	46
3. <i>The Streams Cohere: Irving, Albury, and The Morning Watch</i> .....	53
a) Edward Irving: The Prophet in a Geneva Gown .....	53
b) The Albury Conferences and the Founding of <i>The Morning Watch</i> .....	57

# Chapter Two

## A Paradigm of Certitude :

<b>Albury's Hermeneutical Foundation .....</b>	<b>63</b>
1. <i>Inspiration, Revelation, and the Word of God</i> .....	63
a) Inspiration and Revelation .....	65
b) Inspiration and Scripture's Literal Sense.....	70
c) Inspiration and the Literal-Typological Hermeneutic .....	76
d) Inspiration and a Unified Narrative Theory .....	79
e) Inspiration, Prophecy, and the Hermeneutical Task.....	82
2. <i>The Quest for Certitude: Theology's Pandora's Box</i> .....	87
a) Shift From Dogmatics to Apologetics .....	90
b) Dubious Certitude .....	92

# Chapter Three

<b>Prophecy, Revelation, and Revival.....</b>	<b>99</b>
1. <i>The Centrality of Prophecy</i> .....	99
a) Prophecy's Grand Narrative .....	100
b) The efficacy of the Prophetic Word .....	101
2. <i>Revelation through the Progress of Time</i> .....	105
a) Hermeneutics and History .....	105
b) Progressive Revelation .....	108
c) Historicist Revelation and the Premillennial System .....	111
3. <i>Last Days' Revelation to a Failing Church</i> .....	114
a) The Spirit of Antichrist and the Character of the Age .....	114
b) Christendom Seeped in the Spirit of Antichrist .....	120

# Chapter Four

## Doctrine Through the

<b>Premillennial Forge .....</b>	<b>134</b>
1. <i>The Transforming Engine of Hermeneutics</i> .....	134
a) Last Days Revelation and the Forging of Doctrine.....	136
(1) Dispensations and a Philosophy of History .....	136
(2) Ecclesiology .....	139
(3) Christology Through The Premillennial Forge .....	147
(4) The Pretribulation Rapture .....	159
2. <i>The Power of Hermeneutics over Dogma</i> .....	165

# Chapter Five

## The Church With Her Endowment of

### Holiness and Power ..... 168

1. *Good News and Controversies*..... 168
2. *The Shaping Principles of Albury's Pneumatology*..... 169
3. *The Last Day's Pentecost Begins*..... 172
  - a) Expectations of a Last Day's Pentecost ..... 172
  - b) The Spirit Comes in Power: Events in Port Glasgow ..... 173
  - c) Pentecost Comes to London..... 179
4. *The Church With Her Endowment of Holiness and Power*..... 182
  - a) Interpreting the Last Days Pentecost..... 182
  - b) The Gifts of the Spirit and a Docetic Christology..... 190
5. *Signs of the Times: Miracles before a Faithless Church* ..... 197
  - a) The Growing Crisis ..... 197
  - b) Campbell, Maclean, and Scott versus the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland ..... 197

# Chapter Six

## Heresy And Holiness ..... 201

1. *The Ark of God in the Temple of Dagon— Mr. Irving's Church and the London Presbytery*..... 201
  - a) Edward Irving before the London Presbytery..... 203
  - b) The Response of The Morning Watch..... 208
  - c) "Come Out, Come Out, Of Babylon" Schism and the True Church..... 210
  - d) Attrition at Albury and a Changing Circle..... 214
2. *Living Under the Gifts of the Holy Spirit* ..... 218
  - a) Restorationism and Hierocracy..... 218
3. *The Fall of Babylon*..... 222
4. *The Morning Watch is past... The Day Star is about to Arise*..... 223

# Conclusion

<b>Designing the Last Days .....</b>	<b>226</b>
1. <i>Assessing the Significance of The Morning Watch</i> .....	226
2. <i>Insights Gleaned from The Morning Watch</i> .....	228
a) A middle Course on Irving.....	228
b) Designing the Last Days: The Contours and Failure of Albury's Premillennialism .....	235
(1) The Power of Presupposition, the Poverty of Historicism.....	236
(2) More than Just a Different End: Adventist Teleology and Eschatology .....	246
(a) The Unconditioned Nature of Eschatology.....	246
(b) Adventist Teleology and Eschatology .....	248
(3) Faith Redefined .....	252
3. <i>Albury's Design of the Last Days: A Proto-Foundationalist Myth</i> .....	256
 <b>Appendices .....</b>	 <b>259</b>
A. <i>Contents of The Morning Watch</i> .....	260
B. <i>Edward Irving/The Morning Watch Chronology</i> .....	268
 <b>Bibliography .....</b>	 <b>271</b>
 <b>Index .....</b>	 <b>296</b>

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Knowledge is in the end based on acknowledgement.  
Ludwig Wittgenstein. *On Certainty*, sct. 378.

If Wittgenstein is right—and I believe he is—then whatever knowledge I have gained in the last five and a half years of this study, must be understood as an acknowledgement of all I have been given. Many people have contributed to this project, both directly and indirectly, and without their support and encouragement, this study would not exist. From the first book opened in research to the final printing of the results, this study has been a joy and a gift for which I owe more gratitude than I could ever express. Nevertheless, as it is right to give thanks and praise, let me express my gratitude for those whose support, help, and love, have had the most powerful impact on creating this thesis.

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Thanks to the ministry of Younglife, through which I grasped the significance of the Saviour and was first trained as a disciple. There I learned first that “Jesus is not what we are all about. Jesus is all that we are all about.” While these words have been repeatedly affirmed, from Barth to pastoral ministry, I learned the concept of Christocentricity first in Younglife, and for this I will forever be grateful.

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lege not only to be a place of the deepest academics, but a place of living and vibrant faith, and this perhaps most of all, I found in Andrew.

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And to my precious wife Linda Lee, more than any other, must go the deepest of my gratitude, respect, and love. The success of this study and indeed, the best parts of all my life are due most from her being a part of it. She has ever been to me a partner in life and ministry, an example of faith and prayer, and an endless source of encouragement and strength. Nineteen years together have brought a delightful stream of adventures—from Givler Dome to Grindelwald, from Yakima to Yorkshire, from Whitworth to Wengen. And with each year better than the one before, I cannot approach the coming years with anything but joy. Such a wife is indeed worth more than jewels and in Linda I have found the fulfillment of the proverb's every word, up to and including the flax on the roof. In gratitude, respect, and love, this thesis is dedicated to her.

Mark Rayburn Patterson  
Epiphany, 2001  
Ventura, California

Τῷ δὲ δυναμένῳ φυλάξαι ὑμᾶς ἀπταίστους καὶ σῆσαι κατενώπιον τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ ἀμώμους ἐν ᾧ  
γαλλιάσει, μόνῳ θεῷ σωτῆρι ἡμῶν διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν δόξα μεγαλωσύνη κράτος  
καὶ ἐξουσία πρὸ παντός τοῦ αἰῶνος καὶ νῦν καὶ εἰς πάντας τοὺς αἰῶνας, ἀμήν.

*Jude 1:24-25*

## References to *The Morning Watch*

*The Morning Watch*, originally published quarterly, from March 1829 to June 1833, is now found bound in seven volumes. Two full sets are preserved at the British Library under the reference numbers P.P. 725 and 764.m.I3. While both sets appear identical (except in colour of binding), I tried to limit my research to the first of these listed, in order to maintain strict consistency in quotations and understanding of the journal as a whole.

For the sake of both my own research and any subsequent studies it might encourage, I have endeavoured to maintain a certain precision in recording most quotations and references to the journal, using a decimal point to provide the approximate place on the page where the quote may be found. Thus, references to *The Morning Watch* in this thesis will take the following form:

Footnote Citation	Refers to
TMW I:184.3—June 1829	<i>The Morning Watch</i> , vol. I, p. 184, approximately three-tenths the way down the page, in the June 1829 issue.
TMW II:411.5—June 1830	<i>The Morning Watch</i> , vol. II, p. 411, approximately mid page, in the June 1830 issue.
TMW V:4.1—March 1832	<i>The Morning Watch</i> , vol. V, p. 4 at the top of the page, in the March 1832 issue.
TMW IV:235.9f—September 1831	<i>The Morning Watch</i> , vol. IV, from the bottom of page 235 and continuing onto page 236, in the September 1831 issue.
TMW III:314-24—June 1831	<i>The Morning Watch</i> , vol. III, pp. 314-324, in the June 1831 issue.

All references of significance will contain the date of issue. Secondary or supporting references will rarely mention the date. While, titles of the articles are usually omitted for sake of space and redundancy, Appendix A contains a complete list of the journal's table of contents which may be used to determine source article from which the quotation or reference has been made. Finally, authors are often, but not always mentioned. Most articles in the journal are anonymous or list pseudonymous authors and are rarely illuminating.



# Introduction

## *The Vantage of The Morning Watch*



### 1. Headwaters of the Premillennial Stream

"If early nineteenth-century millenarianism had produced a hero, he would have been Edward Irving. Instead, Irving came to the end of his life in 1834 as an outcast among the millenarian party, his very name transformed into a term of reproach among evangelicals and decent citizens."<sup>1</sup>

Ardour and order, in the church, are never easily reconciled. Inevitably one is emphasized to the other's neglect while existing incongruities are forced into a pattern barely able to contain the pressure of dissenting realities. Such has been the fate of Edward Irving. This tension, pervading every aspect of his life and thought, has rendered him a fascinating yet confusing study. A sober, high church Scot, he walked the streets of London in a fedora and black cloak. Sensitive and caring pastor to the poor, he remained a high Tory defender of the divine right of kings and impassioned critic of any form of democracy or capitalism that might adulterate Britain's paternalist society. Called as an unknown to the tiny Caledonian Chapel his preaching attracted the attention of the powerful, professional, and literati of London. George Canning, future Prime Minister, before the House of Commons, declared Irving to be "the greatest orator of our times" and those attending services included S. T. Coleridge, Thomas Carlyle, W. Wilberforce, Charles Lamb, Thomas Macaulay, Jeremy Bentham, Dorothy and William Wordsworth, and the young W. E. Gladstone.<sup>2</sup> Irving's theology too was held in ten-

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<sup>1</sup> Ernest Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> See chapter III, A. L. Drummond, *Edward Irving and His Circle, Including Some Consideration of the "Tongues" Movement in the Light of Modern Psychology* (London: James Clarke & Co., LTD., 1936) and Arnold Dallimore, *The Life of Edward Irving, The Forerunner of the Charismatic Movement* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Press, 1983), p. 33.

*Introduction*  
*The Vantage of The Morning Watch*

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sion, forced between the paradoxical parameters of a highly creative Chalcedonian<sup>3</sup> Christology and a rigid fundamentalism, intricate biblical analysis and imaginative millenarianism, high church Presbyterianism and nascent Pentecostalism, rationalism, and enthusiasm.

One solution to resolving this tension is to postulate and then contrast an “early” and “late” Irving.<sup>4</sup> The former systematic, Christocentric, orthodox and balanced, while the latter was Romantic, millennial, heretical, and enthusiastic. While tempting, it remains a highly synthetic and arbitrary endeavour, for neither his writings nor life can be forced into such symmetry. From his pen would flow alternately, and in juxtaposition, sophisticated restatements of patristic Christology, denunciations of fallen Christendom, and descriptions of the church’s final days as the seventh trumpet sounds and the bowl of God’s wrath is poured out. For Irving was a puritan with the temperament of a cavalier, a prophet in a Geneva gown, an irreconcilable mix of passion and brilliance, wisdom and foolishness, humility and pride.

These complexities and paradoxes, combined with Irving’s tragic final years replete with heresy charges, schismatic ministry, and particularly a nascent Pentecostalism, have led historians and theologians alike to produce a host of caricatures, woefully reductionistic and partisan, which deny he bore any lasting, constructive influence on doctrinal development. Irving’s influence, where it is acknowledged, is described in almost completely negative or pejorative terms. The classic example of this arose in 1864 when renowned Brethren scholar S. P. Tregelles attributed the source of the premillennial rapture to Edward Irving and his Regent Square congregation in an attempt to undermine both the doctrine and his adversary John Nelson Darby.<sup>5</sup> Irving’s name had become a pariah, a means to dismiss doctrinal positions and demean those who held them.

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<sup>3</sup> In using the term “Chalcedonian” to describe Irving’s Christology, I mean to express two important facts: 1) Irving’s position, like Chalcedon, reflects a careful and intentional course, avoiding the Monophysite and Monothelite heresies and the errors of both Nestorius and Eutyches; and 2) Irving’s Christology appears more in keeping with that of Eastern Orthodoxy than the West. The precise influence of Chalcedon, or perhaps even more, the Cappadocians, or the germ of Irving’s Christology, remains a mystery.

<sup>4</sup> This will again be addressed at the conclusion of the thesis.

<sup>5</sup> S. P. Tregelles, *The Hope of Christ’s Second Coming* (London: Houlston & Wright, 1864), p. 26. Irving’s doctrine of the pretribulation rapture will be discussed in chapter four.

*Introduction*  
*The Vantage of The Morning Watch*

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Whether as a millennialist, enthusiast, or schismatic, Irving's legacy became, in various ways, bound largely to the dubious, marginal, and heretical.<sup>6</sup>

If Irving has been anathematized, the Albury Circle, of which Irving was a leading member, and its journal *The Morning Watch*, have been effectively ignored. While the pages of this journal have been gleaned for insight into such areas as Irving's theology, and the formation of the Catholic Apostolic Church, the journal's purpose, message, and influence has never been studied for its own sake. This is surprising in light of the lasting influence of its doctrine, the membership of the Albury Circle, and the responses it produced in the theological journals of the day. During its brief four year run *The Morning Watch* was arguably the most influential of prophecy studies and one of the most trenchant of Christian journals of its day. Nevertheless, the journal has remained essentially unassessed, written off as the brief project of a sectarian group and thus a doctrinal and historical backwater of no lasting impact or importance.

A cursory scan of the content of *The Morning Watch* may suggest this perspective is not invalid. It is certainly true that prophecy studies through the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were considered an acceptable academic endeavour.<sup>7</sup> Isaac Newton had written an interpretation of the prophecies of Daniel<sup>8</sup> and Samuel Horsley, the first editor of *Newton's Works*, did not hold it inconsistent with scientific inquiry to write on the identity of the Antichrist and England's prophetic role in the last days.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Several examples may be given: (1) Iain Murray gently blames Irving for turning Britain from a (proper) postmillennial eschatology to premillennialism. See *The Puritan Hope: Revival and the Interpretation of Prophecy* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Press, 1975), pp. 187ff and especially p. 194. (2) Arnold Dallimore, *op. cit.*, following the methodology of Tregelles, seeks to discredit charismatic theology by associating it with Irving. (3) B. B. Warfield, *Counterfeit Miracles* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1972), pp. 125-153 similarly, uses Irving to illustrate the folly of pursuing charismata. (4) Charles Ryrie, *Come Quickly Lord Jesus: What You Need to Know About the Rapture* (Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 1996), pp. 77-82, simply dismisses Irving as a "heretic."

<sup>7</sup> A central thesis in W. H. Oliver, *Prophets and Millennialists: The Uses of Biblical Prophecy in England from the 1790s to the 1840s* (Auckland: University of Auckland Press, 1978).

<sup>8</sup> Isaac Newton, *Observations Upon the Prophecies of Daniel, and the Apocalypse of St. John* (Dublin: Georg Ewing and William Smith, 1733). See Frank E. Manuel, *The Religion of Isaac Newton* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974). In balance, one might remember the comment of Voltaire: "Sir Isaac Newton wrote his comment upon the Revelation to console mankind for the great superiority he had over them in other respects." Quoted by Bernard McGinn, "Revelation," in Alter and Kermode, *Literary Guide to the Bible* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 537.

<sup>9</sup> Samuel Horsley, *A Letter to the Lord Bishop of Rochester on His Opinion Concerning Antichrist* (York, 1801).

But *The Morning Watch* drifted from this tradition. In the brief years of its existence the journal and its contributors profoundly changed the nature of prophecy studies. Through its pages one can trace a shift from that of learned exposition of the prophetic Scriptures to the fringe of Christian witness, from rational extrapolation of biblical truth in the tradition of Newton and Priestly, to irrational zealotry and sectarian interests. Prophetic interpretation was replaced by polemic and paranoia as Albury's perception of themselves veered from prophets and revivalists within the church to faithful remnant amid fallen Babylon. The manifestation of tongues at Irving's Regent Square Church and *The Morning Watch's* growing fascination with spiritual gifts and healings only exacerbated this perception, further separating them from the mainstream of the church. Albury's increasingly radical premillennialism and its concomitant signs and wonders had convinced the larger church that its interests were peripheral, irrelevant, and held only by a lunatic fringe on the boundaries of orthodoxy. This assessment has, essentially, prevailed to the present day and led to the marginalizing of Edward Irving, the Albury Circle and *The Morning Watch*.

Yet, reconsideration may be necessary for several reasons. First, is the person of Edward Irving. Since his death in 1834, Irving has been largely villainized and marginalized. More recently, this trend has been reversed, with a number of excellent studies that successfully acknowledge the substantial depth of his theology, especially in areas of Christology.<sup>10</sup> These have accurately unveiled Irving's theological acumen and the brilliance of his incarnational Christology, dispelling much of the vindictive and error that has long surrounded him. But a weak link in Irving studies, held I think by both those who respect and those repulsed by his theology, is the lack of contextualization. Irving's theology is almost universally removed from the matrix of his premillennialism and studied in isolation from this, the single most determining influence upon his thought. *The Morning Watch* provides a fresh and more holistic panorama on the thought of

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<sup>10</sup> Andrew Walker, "The Angel of Regent Square," 4 December 1984, BBC Radio Four. Colin Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991), pp. 99f. Colin Gunton, "Two Dogmas Revisited: Edward Irving's Christology," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 41 (1988) pp. 359-376. Graham McFarlane, *Christ and the Spirit: The Doctrine of the Incarnation According to Edward Irving* (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster Press, 1996). Graham McFarlane, "Strange News From Another Star: An Anthropological Insight from Edward Irving," in *Persons Divine and Human*, Christoph Schwöbel and Colin E. Gunton, eds. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991), pp. 98-119. Irving's premillennial Christology will be addressed in chapters five and six.



*Introduction*  
*The Vantage of The Morning Watch*

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Edward Irving by seeking to understand him from that perspective which he himself felt most important.

A Second reason justifying a reappraisal of Albury's influence is the prominence of premillennial belief. What many in Irving's day understood as peripheral, strange, and mysterious has been shown to be far more enduring, substantial, and influential than many might have imagined. Premillennialism, far from fading with time, has proven to be one of the most enduring religious legacies of early nineteenth century Britain. Coalescing from isolated strands following the French Revolution, the Albury Conferences "brought together almost every British millenarian scholar of note. . . . and more than any other event, gave structure to the British millenarian revival, consolidating both the theology and the group of men who were to defend it."<sup>11</sup> Premillennialism received here its basic contours before being picked up by the Plymouth Brethren and subsequently passed on to America through such vehicles as the preaching of J. N. Darby, the Scofield Reference Bible, and the Niagara Bible Conferences, to become a significant and influential part in American Fundamentalism and conservative Evangelicalism.<sup>12</sup>

Far from being the opinion of a marginalized minority, the premillennial-apocalyptic worldview has become, at least in the United States, a dominant means of assessing and addressing the world. The majority of Americans—sixty-two percent according to a 1983 Gallop poll—believe in the literal return of Jesus to Earth.<sup>13</sup> Historian Dwight Wilson, in a study of American prophecy belief "conservatively estimated the number of firmly committed premillennialists at eight million."<sup>14</sup> Perhaps more significant, premillennialism forms an important part of the theology of some of the largest and fastest growing denominations in the United States, including the Southern

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<sup>11</sup> Ernest Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 18.

<sup>12</sup> See Sandeen, *Roots*. George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism 1870-1925* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980). George M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991).

<sup>13</sup> George Gallup, Jr., and Jim Castelli, *The People's Religion: American Faith in the Nineties* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1989), p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 2. See Dwight Wilson, *Armageddon Now! The Premillenarian Response to Russia and Israel since 1917* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), p. 12.

Baptists with almost fifteen million members, The Assemblies of God (2.1 million members and 95% growth between 1973-88), and the Church of the Nazarene (562,000 members in 1988). Hal Lindsey's *The Late, Great, Planet Earth*, a popularized rendering of premillennial doctrine had sold nine million copies by 1978 and seventeen million more by 1990.<sup>15</sup> At last count, the book had gone through more than one hundred printings, totaling thirty-five million copies in fifty-two languages.<sup>16</sup> Christopher Hill, in his study of Puritanism's view of the Antichrist, concluded that prophecy beliefs similar to these had "disappeared . . . into the world of cranks."<sup>17</sup> If this is true, it is clear in the light of recent studies that their membership is neither small or without influence. Hill is more correct when he concludes, "in one sense we have been exploring a trivial blind alley in human thought: but at all points it trembles on the brink of major intellectual issues."<sup>18</sup> Oliver, in concluding his helpful study of nineteenth-century millennialism, writes, "so great has been the recent revival, in part through fundamentalism and Pentecostalism, of anticipations of the end of the world, that it may be no longer proper, in the later 1970s, to treat such Christianity as of marginal significance."<sup>19</sup>

The Albury Conferences and *The Morning Watch*, affords an important means of studying the premillennial school at its very foundation. Essentially unknown (and unexamined) in our own time, the journal was, for a brief period, at the center of attention and influence, and one of the most important points of collaboration between premillennial theologians. The intentional attempt of the Albury Circle to convey through the pages of their journal both method and doctrine, provides unprecedented insight into the foundational theological tenets, methodology, and historical development of premillennialism.

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<sup>15</sup> Boyer, *op. cit.*, p. 5. The prologue of this book (pp. 1-18) offers a cornucopia of details describing the breadth of popular millennialism in the United States and demonstrating that while premillennialism may not be "mainstream" or universal, it is prevalent, entrenched, and influential.

<sup>16</sup> Richard Abanes, *End-Time Visions: The Road to Armageddon?* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1998), especially "Lindsey's Looking Glass," pp. 84-90.

<sup>17</sup> Christopher Hill, *Antichrist in Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Verso, 1990), p. 159.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* p. 177.

<sup>19</sup> Oliver, *Prophets and Millennialists*, p. 241.

Finally, and similarly, another element of Irving's theology—nascent Pentecostalism—has also moved to a place of prominence and can in nowise be considered of peripheral interest. Contemporary Pentecostalism, despite a separation of time and differences in doctrinal detail, nevertheless reflects significant similarities to that which was practiced at Regent Square and interpreted in *The Morning Watch*. Early Pentecostal apologists and historians noted these similarities and one recent study suggests a possible historic line from Irving to at least one stream of modern Pentecostalism.<sup>20</sup> Contemporary Pentecostalism, like Albury before them, perceived history to be at its end and the outpouring of miracles and gifts to be indicative of this truth. From Pentecostalism's birth at the Azusa Street Revival in 1906 to the "Toronto Blessing" revival in 1994, supernatural gifts have been wed to millennial expectation and seen as proof that the church is moving towards the last days and being equipped to meet them. In short, one may no longer say that either Albury's premillennialism or Irving's nascent pentecostalism exist as the sole possessions of a marginalized minority. On the contrary, those holding to one or both of these theologies, in their contemporary expressions, number in the hundreds of millions and constitute some of the largest and fastest growing portions within the Christian faith. The vantage of Albury provides unprecedented insight into the development and theology of both.

## 2. The Approach of this Study

The intended goal of this study is to explore the content of *The Morning Watch* in order to determine its basic theological premises and methodology. Four primary areas will be continually addressed through this thesis: 1) the Circle's premillennial worldview and its presuppositions; 2) Albury's corresponding hermeneutic with its *a priori* conclusions; 3) their understanding of revelation and Christian epistemology; and 4) the combined effect these had on shaping both doctrine and ministry. Together these four reveal the essence of Albury's premillennial thought, methodology, and practice, providing a unique vantage of modern premillennialism in its formative years. Addi-

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<sup>20</sup> D. William Faupel, *The Everlasting Gospel: The Significance of Eschatology in the Development of Pentecostal Thought* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), pp. 133ff.

*Introduction*  
*The Vantage of The Morning Watch*

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tionally, this study will provide evidence to show that Edward Irving's theology—its center and determining structure—is no less than the premillennial schema expressed in *The Morning Watch*. Together, these will provide what I believe is a “middle course” on the person and work of Edward Irving and a critique of premillennial theology, as manifested among the Albury Circle.

It is important too, to note what this study does not intend to accomplish. First, this is not an attempt to prove that the roots of modern premillennialism, especially as found in the dispensational school, lie at Albury.<sup>21</sup> Rather, this study is intentionally focused on the theological methodologies and doctrine of *The Morning Watch*. Where these are similar to modern forms, they will be noted, more in hope of encouraging further research than providing exhaustive conclusions. Second, this is not a study of nineteenth century premillennialism *per se*. I have made only a limited attempt to connect or compare the ideas found in *The Morning Watch* with their millennialist contemporaries, believing these have already been done<sup>22</sup> and fearing it would detract from the singular task of discerning what this journal holds and expresses. Third, this thesis is not meant to be, primarily, a study of Edward Irving but *The Morning Watch*. Although Irving's shadow falls across the whole of the journal, no attempt is made to compare or contrast his writings in *The Morning Watch* with his collected works.<sup>23</sup> Finally, this research must not be considered an exhaustive study of *The Morning Watch*. The journal's breadth has required I take an intentionally limiting approach, focusing my research and its conclusions to the four areas noted above.

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<sup>21</sup> For one study looking at this, see Mark Patterson and Andrew Walker, “Our Unspeakable Comfort: Irving, Albury, and the Origins of the Pretribulation Rapture,” *Fides et Historia*, XXXI:1. Winter/Spring 1999, pp. 66-81.

<sup>22</sup> W. H. Oliver, *op. cit.* Boyer, *op. cit.* pp. 21-115. Sandeen, *op. cit.* pp. 3-80. Frederic J. Baumgartner, *Longing for the End: A History of Millennialism in Western Civilization* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999). Clarke Garrett, *Respectable Folly: Millenarians and the French Revolution in France and England* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975). L. E. Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers*, 4 vols., (Washington D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1946, [vol. iii], 1948 [vol. ii], 1950 [vol. i], and 1954 [vol. iv]). J. F. C. Harrison, *The Second Coming: Popular Millenarianism 1780-1850* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979). Richard Kyle, *The Last Days are Here Again: A History of the End Times* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998). Timothy Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming: American Premillennialism 1875-1982* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1983), pp. 13-25. Eugen Weber, *Apocalypses: Prophecies, Cults, and Millennial Beliefs through the Ages* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

<sup>23</sup> This would actually be of little value, as Irving's collected works tend to edit out aspects of his premillennialism.

*Introduction*  
*The Vantage of The Morning Watch*

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This study of *The Morning Watch* will follow a *primarily* thematic rather than chronological course. While the historical context and evolution of thought over time will be noted, and though the chapters move with a loose progression through the journal's succeeding volumes, my primary interest lies on the nature and character of Albury's theology. This is especially evident with the first four chapters and their almost singular focus upon the doctrines and methodology of the Circle. Chapters five and six, without turning from this primary focus, take on a more historical interest as events in Scotland and London influence the Circle and are made elements of their premillennial system.

The first chapter (*The Rising Voice of Prophecy and the Founding of The Morning Watch*) will provide an introduction to *The Morning Watch* by setting it within a larger context, both theologically and historically. Albury's premillennial apocalypticism was built upon a particular worldview and epistemology, profoundly shaped by Enlightenment rationalism, Romanticism, and other cultural influences and it is here that these forces will be assessed. The next two chapters will address themes central to the whole of the journal and its theology: Chapter two (*A Paradigm of Certitude: Albury's Hermeneutical Foundation*) will define Albury's approach and interpretation of Scripture, showing the interconnection and reliance of this hermeneutic with their larger premillennial worldview. Chapter three (*Prophecy, Revelation, and Revival*) will build on this, noting the centrality prophecy took in Albury's interpretive and doctrinal work, and their historicist understanding of revelation. These in turn led the Circle to certain conclusions regarding the nature and state of the church that will also be explored in this chapter. Chapter four (*Doctrine Through the Premillennial Forge*) will look at the power of Albury's premillennial presuppositions and corresponding hermeneutic to shape and create doctrine. Chapter five (*The Church With Her Endowment of Holiness and Power*) will take a more historical turn as Pentecostal manifestations arise, first in Scotland and then Irving's National Scot Church on Regent Square, London. The manifestations played an important role in Albury's apocalyptic worldview and this chapter will study how these were integrated into their premillennial system. Chapter Six (*Heresy and Holiness*) will again take a slightly more historical track, looking at the heresy

*Introduction*  
*The Vantage of The Morning Watch*

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trials that engulfed Irving and Albury's response articulated in *The Morning Watch*. The study's conclusion (*Designing the Last Days*) will, as already mentioned, suggest a middle course to understanding Irving. This is intended to avoid the parochial anti-charismatic and Irving as Christological heretic schools, on the one side, and the pro-charismatic, and Christology affirming approach on the other. The error of the former lies in their ignorance of and prejudice against Irving, while the latter, being by far the more accurate, nevertheless misses the larger context provided in the pages of *The Morning Watch*. The content of the journal demonstrates that Irving's thought is far more complex and broad than previously articulated and isolated from premillennialism, cannot be properly or wholly understood. The study will conclude with a look at the contours and failure of Albury's premillennial system, showing how it is more a product of the Circle's presuppositions, an *a priori* paradigm that transformed the theology, faith, and church Albury was labouring to revive.

It is hoped that these will provide insight into the essential theological and methodological issues within *The Morning Watch*. The pages of this journal provide a priceless vantage into premillennialism at its source and unveil the power of presuppositions to shape biblical interpretation and Christian doctrine into the image of its *a priori* expectations.

# Chapter One

## The Rising Voice of Prophecy and the Founding of *The Morning Watch*

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“Watchman, What Think Ye of the Night?”



### 1. The Contours of Romantic Apocalypticism

#### a) *Apocalypticism and Millennialism*

Modern premillennialism is the late child of the larger and far more ancient *Weltanschauung* of Apocalypticism and consequently shares with apocalypticism many of its essential traits. Apocalyptic theories usually arise during periods of intense change or hardship that are interpreted in terms of spiritual conflict at the edge of the world's end. Norman Cohn, in his influential work *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, suggests apocalyptic millennialism is a psychological response to political upheaval and economic collapse.<sup>1</sup> Michael Barkun, writing in response to Cohn, attributes the apocalyptic response to disaster, either natural or humanly caused.<sup>2</sup> In the end, it is easier to speak of apocalypticism's shape than source. Apocalyptic worldviews are a fearful and pessimistic assessment that seeks to assign order and meaning to events by demonstrating their role and even necessity within an ultimate or certain temporal progression. Consequently, apocalypticism approaches life in terms that are largely negative and dualistic. Apocalypticism is a “conspiracy theory of cosmic proportions,”<sup>3</sup> and thus it disambiguates earthly events, battles, and the successions of kings and kingdoms as physical manifestations of cosmic battles and elements of the ultimate struggle between the forces of good and evil.

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<sup>1</sup> Norman Cohn, *Pursuit of the Millennium* (London: Pimlico, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> Michael Barkun, *Disaster and the Millennium* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).

-Chapter One-  
The Rising Voice of Prophecy & the Founding of *The Morning Watch*

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Apocalypses in the Christian tradition would maintain this dualistic shape while personifying the struggle to one between God and his church on one side, and the forces of Satan on the other.

For all the similarities, some important differences exist between apocalypticism and premillennialism. First, the former, while centered upon the end and presupposing it, nevertheless, has little interest in the setting of dates or precise calendars describing the last days' unfolding. Premillennialism, on the other hand, has been, since the early nineteenth century, enthralled by charts, timelines, and signs that precisely indicate one's place in the eschatological countdown. Second, while apocalypticism is more a literary genre than doctrinal formula, the opposite is true for premillennialism. Thus, where apocalyptic uses vivid imagery to describe the principles and forces at work in history, premillennialism seeks their precise identity, correlation, and systematic integration within the whole. Premillennialism transforms apocalyptic generalities into specific manifestations and doctrines within a single temporal spectrum, viewing such images not only as ideas but literal and identifiable entities manifesting in time.

Premillennialism is a specific apocalyptic scenario centered upon the thousand year binding of Satan and reign of Christ with his saints, as described in the twentieth chapter of the Bible's Book of Revelation. Premillennialists see the millennium as a literal period in which Christ inaugurates an interim earthly kingdom before the last judgment and end of the world. While premillennialists today hold significantly different opinions regarding the details of this kingdom's initiation, the perspective held by the Albury Circle is essentially identical to that found in contemporary dispensationalism and known today as pretribulational premillennialism. This perspective holds to two "second" comings. The first, occurring "in secret" or invisibly, initiates the rapture, the raising of all true believers to "meet the Lord in the air." This is immediately followed by a period of unprecedented horrors, known as the Great Tribulation, which falls upon the apostate and faithless left behind. This tribulation lasts seven years, at the end of

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<sup>3</sup> Timothy P. Weber, *op. cit.*, p. 188. Richard Hofstadter, in his important analysis of "The Paranoid Style in American Politics," identified an affinity between the apocalyptic mindset and those holding elaborate conspiracy theories. Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style of American Politics and Other Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), pp. 29-30.



which Christ will return again, this time visibly and with his raptured saints, to destroy his enemies and inaugurate the millennial kingdom. Premillennialism is generally pessimistic, believing history is digressing ever further into evil and beyond any hope of restorative redemption. Change will come only through an apocalyptic destruction of the current world order and descent of a New Jerusalem, all by the hand of God.

The Albury Circle is largely responsible for turning Britain to premillennialism from the optimistic postmillennialism it had held for roughly the previous century and a half. Postmillennialism, like premillennialism, interprets the thousand-year reign of Christ in essentially literal terms but, in antithesis to premillennialism, believes the return of Christ will occur at the culmination, not initiation, of this period. The millennium, identified with the life of the church, is defined as a period in which Christ reigns through the church, as its influence expands to include every nation and people. At the end of this period, at the culminating triumph of the Gospel spread through his church, Christ will return. Postmillennialism is profoundly optimistic, believing that the missionary, social, evangelistic labours of the church are capable of changing the world, ideas that were, at best, foolishly naïve in the eyes of premillennialists.

### *b) The Worldview of Premillennial Apocalypticism*

An enduring attribute of millennialism is its ability to alchemize order and divine purpose from even the most tumultuous of times. Events in every age—from the turn of the first millennium to the turn of the second, from the persecutions of Rome to the rise of the Soviet Union—have provided no shortage of raw material and have given occasion to many and varied responses which seek to interpret historical events within a larger theological framework. Apocalyptic and millennial worldviews allow revelatory meaning to be given to even the most mundane or horrible. Millennialism allows order to be imposed on chaos, understanding given to suffering, hope to be possessed where none may be logically warranted, and appropriate response to be discerned, summoned, and applied. Thus, to say that millennialism has important psychological and polemical

-Chapter One-  
The Rising Voice of Prophecy & the Founding of *The Morning Watch*

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uses is not necessarily to have fallen into reductionism nor deny a theological intent or center.<sup>4</sup>

The assurance that God is not only aware of troubling events but has actually foreseen them and is now prepared to bring the faithful through the fires to a glorious end, brings to the prophecy student no small comfort. If the rain only *randomly* falls on the just and the unjust, if indeed the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong nor bread to the wise but “time and chance happen to them all” (Ecc. 9:11) then history is at the very least without meaning and at worst, without God. But this is not the premillennial worldview. If, in spite of appearance, God is turning every event, every deed, be it good or evil, all religion, be it true or false, to a final, imminent, and cataclysmic end, in which both the truth and the true will emerge victorious, then events have an altogether different meaning. The application of prophecy to historical phenomena allows perceived injustices to be interpreted in biblical and ultimate terms.

The premillennialism of the Albury Circle is best understood as a theological worldview. As such, it exists as a defining *a priori*, an inveterate axiom under which Scripture, history, and culture are appraised and defined. This larger axiom is composed of several, equally immutable concepts: 1) the end of the world is at hand; 2) special revelation has been given the church to understand, endure, and overcome the difficult days before her; and 3) those possessing this knowledge are at the center of God’s will and work of destroying evil and bringing creation to its intended consummation. The message of prophecy, built upon these principles, in turn provided the men of Albury with a profoundly pragmatic approach to ministry. First, prophecy became a powerful vehicle for theological rhetoric.<sup>5</sup> Often premillennial arguments—such as the restoration of Israel—were posited in such a way as to make their opponents appear to doubt the “clear words of Scripture,” a fact that provided Albury with considerable rhetorical ad-

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<sup>4</sup> I agree however with Timothy Weber: “In the long run, therefore, psychological explanations of premillennialism fail. For the vast majority of premillennialists, the religious or doctrinal appeal is more important than the personal one.” *Living in the Shadow*, p. 230.

vantage. Second, prophecy provided a profound impetus to revival. The fear of judgment and anxiety over the coming upheaval has, in every age, pushed men and women toward the church, the faith, and salvation. Finally, prophecy provided moral impetus to a world bored with conventional preaching of earthly obligation and heavenly reward. Premillennialism provided urgency difficult to attain by other means. But all these, from the foundational principles to their pragmatic consequences, reflect a singular theological approach to the world. As Norman Cohn has expressed, “[millennialism] has in fact become simply a convenient label for a particular type of salvationism,”<sup>6</sup> and this is so, not only as an article of faith, but also as a salvific methodology derived from it.

Apocalyptic millennialism is a means of putting life in order, the linking into a system a vast array of details.<sup>7</sup> The basis of this system rests on a temporal and teleological foundation that understands evil as growing even as it is moved toward an inevitable and imminent end. These provide the paradigm by which the community and its divine place within the spatial-temporal order is defined. Consistent with conspiracy theories, the source of evil is seen as an Other, separate and distinct from the believing community though often appearing in its very midst as innocent, righteous, and benign.<sup>8</sup> The community—identified as those who have grasped this reality, separated themselves from this evil Other, and committed themselves to the maintenance and proclamation of truth—awaits in faith the destruction of evil and the reward for their faith. Under the aegis of the premillennial myth, one finds answers to the problem of evil, the nature and role of the community, and the character and content of faith.

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<sup>6</sup> A central thesis of Oliver, *Prophets and Millennialists* is that millennial and apocalyptic imagery were widely used in the polemics of vastly different Christian camps and even by the non-Christian socialist John Owen. See also: Stephen D. O’Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse: A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) and James West Davidson, *The Logic of Millennial Thought, Eighteenth Century New England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).

<sup>6</sup> Cohn, *Pursuit*, p. 13.

<sup>7</sup> The desire to link all things together within a seamless explanation is not limited to premillennialism, but exists as an oft-sought quest of the scientific endeavour. See John D. Barrow, *Impossibility: The Limits of Science and the Science of Limits* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 3ff.

<sup>8</sup> My thinking is shaped here by Earl Creps, *The Conspiracy Argument as Rhetorical Genre*, Ph.D dissertation, Northwestern University, 1980. See also Robert Bellah, “Evil and the American Ethos” in *Sanctions for Evil*, Nevitt Sanford and Craig Comstock, eds. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., 1971), pp. 177-191.

c) *The Epistemology of Romantic Apocalypticism*

*The Morning Watch* was the response of passionate churchmen to an uncertain and rapidly changing age. "Between 1780 and 1850 (that is, within one man's lifetime) Britain changed more than she had done for many hundreds of years previously."<sup>9</sup> During these brief years the country was transformed from a largely agrarian society of small population to the world's first industrialized nation. Changes in economy and population led to the wholesale restructuring of the political system, and traditional social structures. Events on the Continent only exacerbated the fears of those who saw in these changes expanding chaos and anarchy. The horrors aroused with the French Revolution found frequent reincarnation over the first three decades of the nineteenth century, as the rise of Napoleon, wars of coalition, and numerous national uprisings redefined Europe. The July 1830 revolution and fall of the restored Bourbon Monarchy "sent a shudder of alarm through conservative circles everywhere. By this new revolution, which seemed to be directed against the Altar as well as against the throne, all established institutions felt themselves threatened."<sup>10</sup> Intellectual revolutions too were occurring. Thomas Paine's, *The Rights of Man*, challenged traditional political theory at its deepest level. Post-enlightenment rationalism, divested perhaps of its deistic omnipotence, nevertheless posed profound challenges to the concept of revealed religion. Percolating into orthodox Christianity, it demanded rational articulation of spiritual truths while ever questioning the validity and necessity of revelation. These influences, and the belief that the church of their day had become locked in impotence and spiritual lethargy, rallied the men of Albury to action and combined to tacitly yet powerfully shape their journal. In response to these and other events, the men of the Albury Circle sought to provide the church and a fickle age, a ground for certitude and foundation for its faith.

But *The Morning Watch* is as much a product of its times as a response to it, a fact perhaps nowhere more evident than in the Romanticism of the Albury Circle. While acknowledging both Kierkegaard's dictum that Romanticism can not be "en-

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<sup>9</sup> Harrison, *The Second Coming Popular Millenarianism, 1780-1850* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 219.

<sup>10</sup> Alec R. Vidler, *The Church in An Age of Revolution*, The Penguin History of the Church 5 (London: Penguin Books, 1974), p. 45

closed within a concept," and the fact that the term is slippery and broad, there nevertheless remain characteristics of nineteenth century Romanticism that appear repeatedly through the pages of *The Morning Watch*. Indeed, it is safe to say that Albury's apocalyptic premillennialism grows directly from the soil of the romantic worldview.<sup>11</sup>

The romanticism of Britain and the Albury Circle is perhaps best understood as a response to the preponderance of enlightenment rationalism of the previous century. Following the Reformation, the relationship between reason and revelation—and consequently, the Bible's relationship to both—took new shape. While Melancthon could declare, "Aristotle wrote concerning civil morals so learnedly that nothing further concerning this need be demanded,"<sup>12</sup> he nevertheless saw reason as subordinate to revelation. For the most part this remained true through most of sixteenth century Protestant orthodoxy. But over the next two centuries this priority changed, as reason was made superior to revelation, which in turn was seen as superfluous before its "necessary truths." Protestantism of the seventeenth century increasingly relied upon reason as an extrinsic verifier of Christianity's salient issues. Hans Frei, describing England in the late seventeenth to eighteenth centuries, noted "the substance of thought as well as style was increasingly modeled on the precision and sobriety, if not always the economy, of scientific discourse divorced from immediate appeal to sensibility."<sup>13</sup> Romanticism brought a reversal to this perspective but not its antithesis. Scientific methodology and economy were not abandoned for unfettered emotionalism—the very thought of which Albury would find abhorrent—but combined with the subjective and experiential and together provided a valid means of knowing the world. The romantic epistemology of the Albury Circle is best understood as a combination of rational exposition and extrapolation of

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<sup>11</sup> I am indebted to the following for guiding my thoughts in this area: Bernard M. G. Reardon, *Religion in the Age of Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). James Chandler, *England in 1819: The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998). Maurice Cranston, *The Romantic Movement* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995). Stephen Prickett, *Romanticism and Religion: The Tradition of Coleridge and Wordsworth in the Victorian Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976). Boris Ford, ed., *The Romantic Age in Britain: The Cambridge Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

<sup>12</sup> Philip Melancthon, *Cocordia Triglotta*, ed. F. Bente and W. H. T. Daw (reprinted, Milwaukee, WI.: Northwestern Publishing House, 1988), p. 123.

<sup>13</sup> Hans Frei, *Eclipse of the Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), p. 52.

prophetic truths, bound to a subjective sense by which these were known, verified, and made living truths. Romanticism opened the appeal to sensibility without discarding “the precision and sobriety” of enlightenment rationalism. Albury’s balance between the two shifted only after the gifts of the Spirit began manifesting among them. The rational structure of their premillennial system and its hermeneutic was maintained, but the epistemic basis of both shifted increasingly to the subjective. Over the brief years of the journal’s circulation, it became increasingly less clear whether reason was the handmaid to revelation or its *femme fatale*

The men of the Albury Circle deeply shared romanticism’s feeling that all of life and reality are intertwined, forming a single inosculated reality. The romantic worldview rejected the segregation of the spiritual and material worlds, and sought, through a variety of means, to convey their necessary consubstantiality. Romanticism was concerned with life in the here and now, but this life was not posited in antithesis to the eternal, but as eternity manifested in time. “The essence of romanticism. . . lies in the inexpugnable feeling that the finite is not self-explanatory and self-justifying, but that behind it and within it—shining as it were, through it—there is always an infinite ‘beyond,’ and that he who has once glimpsed the infinity that permeates as well as transcends all finitude can never again rest content with the paltry this-and-that, the rationalized simplicities of everyday life.”<sup>14</sup> Even more, an analogical correspondence was seen to exist between the physical, spiritual and moral. As each exists as an element within a single universal reality, each is governed and defined by identical laws. Consequently, to understand any part was to grasp the whole, or in the words of William Blake:

*To see a world in a grain of Sand,  
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,  
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand,  
And Eternity in an hour.*

Central to the romantic worldview is the interfusion of the finite and the infinite, the temporal and the eternal. And in this interfusion alone can the reality and meaning of either be truly grasped. Idealism had found a profoundly temporal locus.

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<sup>14</sup> Reardon, *Religion in the Age of Romanticism*, p. 3.

Similarly, the men of *The Morning Watch* saw reality, as a single, unbroken whole in which each constituent part participates and reveals the whole. Universal history, the natural order, and individual experience, together with the material and spiritual world, were not immiscible realities but intimately bound and governed by the same principles. For the men of the *Watch*, finite realities were not self-explanatory or self-justifying, but temporal manifestations of an eternal will and labour, which lay behind them and shown as an incandescent ideal through them. Albury found in the prophetic scriptures a transcendent reality before which all facts, beliefs, and practices isolated from this grand unity, were seen as paltry and vapid. Through the pages of *The Morning Watch*, contributors would excoriate various elements of the larger church for isolating spiritual realities from the temporal or finite and for failing to see in these material details the transcendent whole that permeated and defined them.

Additionally, Romanticism abandoned any static conception of reality, preferring instead to interpret life in terms of a dynamic process in which the infinite unfolds across time, in history and the individual alike. The real was understood not so much in terms of a static ontology, but in terms of a dynamic process of becoming, and the process itself became the paradigm by which reality was understood and defined. Consequently, Schlegel could define romanticist poetry as "the expression of a secret longing for the chaos which is perpetually striving for new and marvelous births, and which lies hidden in the very womb of orderly creation." The ultimate or infinite was not known or revealed through paradigmatic axioms but through its ever-processing effectuation unfolding across time.

The Albury Circle, from the same perspective, understood history in terms of a dynamic process in which the eternal, in ever more perspicuous and potent manifestations, brought the created order to an intended consummation. The nature of God, the goal of creation, or the divine intendment of humanity were not revealed in static dogmas but through the process of their manifesting across time. Revelation was seen as occurring in process, as a chaotic rebirthing of the divine mind in time and Albury's interest lay in the unceasing drama of its various manifestation and progress through creation, history, and individual alike. Consequently, Albury could welcome the apocalyptic

-Chapter One-  
The Rising Voice of Prophecy & the Founding of *The Morning Watch*

---

trauma of the great tribulation and horrors of Armageddon, for the culminating wholeness these would birth.

Albury's romanticism extends beyond these principles, to deeply shape the contents of *The Morning Watch*. Reflecting the romanticism of their day, the Albury Circle observed their world and its institutions through pessimistic eyes. The material reality was more a "horror to escape" than paradise to be enjoyed and consequently they sought refuge and withdrawal, a turning both inward and upward in search of a more pleasant reality hidden within the mundane. Albury's position reflects a profound dissatisfaction with the optimistic *status quo* and its rationalist perception that the reality of things extends no further phenomenon. Paradoxically, the Circle's quest for the ultimate behind the detail, and their withdrawal into this reality, made them prophets and controversialists who proclaimed openly their disdain for all who saw in the material only that. With larger romanticism, the Albury Circle held that peace was won only through ceaseless and unrelenting striving and thus the Circle turned their hearts to the premillennial kingdom and the proclamation of its reality to a jejune and blind world. All these combined to profoundly shape the message of the Albury Circle and content of *The Morning Watch*. From Albury's romantic worldview would emerge their doctrine that revelation is both historicist and progressive, their criticism of the larger church, their interpretation of spiritual gifts, and their understanding of their own role in the last days. The romantic worldview of the day was highly compatible with apocalyptic sensibilities and the men of Albury melded the two to form the romantic apocalypticism of premillennialism and a new way of viewing their world.

**d) Pre-Albury Premillennialism**

The premillennial theology of the Albury Circle grows from sacred texts written as much as twenty-two centuries previous. From the middle of the second century before



-Chapter One-  
The Rising Voice of Prophecy & the Founding of *The Morning Watch*

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Christ to the end of the first century A.D., apocalyptic literature<sup>15</sup> became a popular means of describing and critiquing the current world order. Apocalyptic writings, from ἀποκάλυψις meaning “revelation,” claimed to unveil that which was hidden, thus providing insight, usually from the divine perspective, into the world’s course and imminent end. While the genre’s source is difficult to determine, it was common to many of the greatest ancient cultures, including the Assyrian, Babylonian, Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman. Apocalyptic literature reached its zenith with Jewish apocalypticism,<sup>16</sup> and it is from these, and the Christian apocalypses they birthed,<sup>17</sup> that one finds the textual source of Albury’s premillennialism.

Of primary interest to Albury were the Old Testament works of Daniel and Ezekiel that were believed to convey images of history’s unfolding and details of the world’s end. The prophet Ezekiel described Israel’s coming restoration (Ezk. 37) and the fate that would soon befall her neighbours, both far and near. These he identified, but in terms mysterious and obtuse—“Gog, and the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal”—thus consigning his intended meaning and their real identity to centuries of creative speculation.<sup>18</sup> Ezekiel describes Israel’s restoration and the destruction of her enemies in so great a cataclysm that it requires seven months to bury the dead. To the men of the Albury Circle, these events were wholly future and Ezekiel’s visions were interpreted as one voice in God’s symphonic revelation of the last days.

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<sup>15</sup> For helpful studies on the nature of apocalyptic literature see: Paul J. Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, ed. and introduction by Dorthy deF. Abrahamse (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985). Bernard McGinn, “Early Apocalypticism: The Ongoing Debate,” in C. A. Patrides and Joseph Wittreich, eds., *The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984). John Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to the Jewish Matrix of Christianity* (New York: Crossroads Publishing Co., 1984). Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1975).

<sup>16</sup> Boyer notes “scholars have identified as least sixteen Judaic works of this genre. One Jewish source from circa 100 A.D. mentions the existence of seventy apocalypses.” Boyer, *op.cit.*, p. 22. Emphasis his.

<sup>17</sup> Norman Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come: The Ancient Roots of Apocalyptic Faith* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

<sup>18</sup> See Boyer, ch. 5 “Ezekiel as the First Cold Warrior,” *When Time Shall be No More*, pp. 152-180 and Richard Abanes, *End Time Visions*, “Gog and Magog,” pp. 286-293. The writers of *The Morning Watch* identified Gog, Magog, and another Ezekiel term, “Rosh,” with Russia and Moscow (TMW V:256.6), a course which has been followed in premillennial interpretations to the present day.

-Chapter One-  
The Rising Voice of Prophecy & the Founding of *The Morning Watch*

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Even more than Ezekiel, the book of Daniel provided students of prophecy with an assortment of images, scenarios, and *dramatis personae* who would figure large at history's end. The second chapter of Daniel provides the first apocalyptic perspective, through a dream of Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar and its interpretation by the Hebrew exile, Daniel. The dream centered on a great statue, made of five different materials: the head from fine gold, the chest and arms of silver, the waist and thighs of bronze, the legs of iron, and the feet made from a mixture of clay and iron (Dan. 2:32). As the king observed, "a stone was cut out, not with human hands," that proceeded to smash the statue at its feet, disintegrating it and making it as chaff before the wind. The stone, in turn, became a great mountain, filling all the earth. The dream is interpreted as God's revelation of what was to come (2:45) and each portion was equated to a particular empire, one present with four to follow. With this vision, we touch upon the first of Daniel's great bequeathals to students of prophecy: an ostensible means of discerning one's position within the course of history and its progress towards apocalyptic renewal. Indeed, references to the timing of God's retributive and restorative acts abound in the book of Daniel albeit in profoundly veiled and cryptic form. In another vision, this time given to Daniel himself and interpreted by the angel Gabriel, the prophet is told of a "transgression that makes desolate," that was to last "two-thousand three hundred days" before being restored by Divine corrective (8:13-14). In chapter nine, Gabriel informs Daniel that "seventy weeks" must pass "to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin" (9:24) and in chapter seven the blasphemy of the little horn, an allusion to a coming king of unique evil, is said to last, "for a time, two times, and half a time." For the students of prophecy gathered at Albury, these words spoke of real progression in measurable increments and the task of the interpreter was to identify the historic initiation of each, interpret their meaning and duration, and synchronize them one to another. Those who could discern the identity of the "fifth monarchy" (the feet of iron and clay) or determine the end of the sixty-ninth week would know their place in the prophetic calendar.

In addition to temporal clues, the book of Daniel provided the Circle with a program of characters destined to play a role in the last days. Again these are identified, but, again, the descriptions remain mysterious and enigmatic. The "king of the south,"

and the “king of the north” (actually a succession of three kings) vie for power through war and dynastic alliances (ch. II). From their midst would arise a particularly evil king who “shall exalt himself and consider himself greater than any god and shall speak horrendous things against the God of gods” (II:36). In addition to this king, various others, with their empires, are revealed through vivid imagery. The sea erupts with the emergence of unworldly beasts, sprouting horns that represent kings and confederacies. And again, the Albury Circle turned to determine the necessary correlation between these prophetic images and their historic referents.

The great Christian apocalypse, John’s Revelation, was viewed by the Albury Circle as the center of Scripture and key to understanding not only its message, but of correlating the various prophetic images, chronologies, and *personae* found elsewhere in the Bible. In full keeping with the standard of apocalyptic, the images here are both vivid and opaque, as John is allowed to glimpse heavenly worship and the last days’ plans of the Ancient of Days. Most important to Albury are those points already gleaned from Daniel: the details of temporal progression and the identity of international powers and individual protagonists who would play a role in the earth’s last, great act. Thus Albury looked to bowls of God’s wrath, the trumpets, and the breaking of the seals, vigorously striving to match them with their historical manifestation and harmonize them to convey a single pattern. Each was seen to reveal a different but essentially parallel series of events. The seals referred to those phenomena that would affect that portion of the world in which the church is placed and which it may therefore observe firsthand. Thus, the fifth seal was identified as the Papacy’s grasp of power through Justinian and the sixth as the “shaking” of that power with the French Revolution. The trumpets refer instead to events more distant, of which the church could only hear. The first trumpet Albury tied to the invasions of northern Barbarians at the time of Valens, the second to Alaric the Goth, the third to Nestorius, and so on. The vials refer to events that intimately concern the church, those things “she can taste.” For Albury, these referred specifically to the series of judgments which fell on the apostate church and those political rulers who had been raised up for the protection of the church only to become “her tyrants and oppressors.” The point to be made is the profoundly literal approach Albury brought to the prophetic writings, in the belief that these unveiled not vague theories or

abstract principles, but precise and perspicuous details regarding the persons, events, and chronology of the end. This end, Albury held, was imminent. Believing the seventh in each of the three series was to occur simultaneously, and believing that all the signs for this event had been fulfilled, the Circle concluded that the world was on the eve of universal cataclysm.<sup>19</sup> Albury took up a futurist interest in the prophecies, seeking to discern the nature and timing of this event.

The apocalyptic and romantic worldviews combined at Albury to produce a new premillennialism, comprised of both new theories and old interpretations given a previously unseen scope. In both Jewish apocalyptic and romanticism, history was understood in terms of dynamic unity, a cohesive and linear reality with a “distinct beginning” and “a clearly defined forward trajectory.” Furthermore, the prophecies of Daniel, John, and others, revealed a key to interpreting this trajectory and hints toward the nature and character of the end.<sup>20</sup> Within and behind the finite realities of history lay an eternal will and labour in which alone they had meaning and unity. These, combined with romanticism’s inclination toward a pessimistic worldview, led the Circle to interpret their world in profoundly negative terms and to see its only hope in the cataclysmic rebirth they saw prophesied in the Scriptures.

While the Circle’s premillennialism was unprecedented in scope, complexity, and expectation, it was built upon a perspective inherited from the ancient church. A simple premillennialism was the eschatology of much of the early church. *The Didache*, *Epistle of Barnabus*, and *The Shepherd of Hermas* all foresee and seek to prepare the church for a time of severe persecution under an antichrist and immediately prior to Christ’s parousia. Many of the early church’s theologians held similar perspectives including Cerinthus, Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Methodius, Tertullian, Montanus, Hippolytus, and Lactantius.<sup>21</sup> Irenaeus (c. 130- c. 200) portrayed history as following the six-day

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<sup>19</sup> *TMW* I:543-577. “On the Interpretation of the Apocalypse.” John Tudor.

<sup>20</sup> Boyer, p. 22. See also Ruth H. Bloch, *Visionary Republic: Millennial Themes in American Thought, 1756-1800* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p. xi.

<sup>21</sup> Donald G. Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*, vol. II (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979), p. 190.

pattern of creation and believed it would extend six thousand years after which Christ would return and institute the seventh, thousand year period, of the millennium.<sup>22</sup> In the late second century Montanism flourished, and became the first of many groups to center upon an imminent second advent. Growing strife and civil war across the Roman world, was viewed by “Montanists as signs of the coming end,”<sup>23</sup> and the sect eagerly looked for the descent of the new Jerusalem, the return of Jesus, and his millennial reign on earth, influencing many of eminence—including Irenaeus, and even more, Tertullian—to take up an apocalyptic interest.

That is not to say premillennialism went unchallenged. Interpreters within the Alexandrian tradition—Origen in particular—saw the biblical prophecies as allegories and disdained any literal reading or expectation as forced and contrived. Following the conversion of the Emperor Constantine and the sweeping “Eusibian mood” in its wake, the pessimistic premillennial eschatology all but disappeared, replaced by the more optimistic postmillennialism. Even the traumas of Rome being sacked by Alaric in 410 and the Goths disposing of the Emperor in 476, failed to turn the church back to a premillennial eschatology, a fact due primarily to Augustine of Hippo.

Irenaeus had described the millennium in terms that were lush, and for Augustine far too sensuous. With the Alexandrian tradition, Augustine rejected the literal readings of biblical apocalyptic, viewing them instead as allegories that described not details of coming events, but grand principles governing the interaction of good and evil, the flesh and the spirit. But Augustine’s influence extended beyond this hermeneutic. Of far greater importance was his philosophy of history, most clearly seen in *The City of God*. Here Augustine used images of biblical eschatology to describe history in terms of a metaphor in which two “cities” strove for dominance and control. These he typologically assigned as Babylon and Jerusalem, with each representing the figural realities of the apostate or ungodly and the children of God. Additionally, Augustine saw the cross and resurrection of Jesus, more than the millennium, as the victory of God and the point at which Satan was (figurally) bound. Most significant is Augustine’s realized eschatol-

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<sup>22</sup> Boyer, p. 46f.

<sup>23</sup> Daniel Cohen, *Waiting for the Apocalypse* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1993), p. 49.

-Chapter One-  
The Rising Voice of Prophecy & the Founding of *The Morning Watch*

---

ogy that pulled the cosmic battles of John's Apocalypse into the very present life of the church.

Now let us hear, brother, let us hear and sing; let us pine for the City where we are citizens...By pining, we are already there; we have already cast our hope, like an anchor, on that coast. I sing of somewhere else, not of here: for I sing with my heart, not my flesh. The citizens of Babylon hear the sound of the flesh, the Founder of Jerusalem hears the tune of our hearts.<sup>24</sup>

Augustine affirmed a final judgment that would see the ultimate separation between the two metaphorical cities and maintained, in principle, a belief in general biblical eschatology. But his interests were existential and his gaze rarely rose beyond the current struggles of the church in proclaiming the message of salvation. He denied a future, literal millennium, and so led the church into its most widely held eschatological position: amillennialism. This approach rejects any literal thousand year period, interpreting the millennium in "spiritual," or ideal terms.

Augustine's influence on later eschatology can hardly be overestimated as he purged the church of both pre and postmillennialism and in so doing led the Catholic Church to reject the literal reading of prophecy, and turn instead to spiritual interpretations. The Council of Ephesus (431) condemned millennialism and church authorities returned to the works of Irenaeus and Victorinus to exorcise from them any millennial corruption. But Augustine's influence is paradoxical. While ridding the church of spurious speculation regarding the last days, he nevertheless, by making the eschatological an element of the contemporary order, allowed apocalyptic to become a normative part of everyday Christian existence. Both these perspectives would influence the men of *The Morning Watch*. On the one hand, contributors to the journal would execrate<sup>25</sup> those who removed eschatological realities to some distant and irrelevant future, separating them from temporal and existential manifestations occurring in the life of the church. The battles described in Revelation—and indeed, the whole of Scripture—were under-

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<sup>24</sup> Quoted in Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p. 315.

<sup>25</sup> Latin: *execrari*, from *ex* + *sacrare*, to render unsacred, to unconsecrate. This, with the modern usage (to declare to be hateful or abhorrent; denounce) makes this a wonderfully accurate description of Albury's approach.

-Chapter One-  
The Rising Voice of Prophecy & the Founding of *The Morning Watch*

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stood as occurring across history, albeit typically and figurally. Consequently, the church, and indeed all of life, could not be understood in any other way than eschatologically. At the same time, Albury lamented the Augustinian preference for the spiritual and/or allegorical, viewing such interpretations as a denial of the clear word of prophecy and its divine intent. Albury, in the character of the Antiochene School, disdained the abstractions demanded of the strictly spiritual or allegorical, and saw the prophecies as literal, concrete, and temporally specific.

In spite of Augustine's non-materialist approach and the official views of the Catholic Church, it is clear that apocalyptic speculation continued to manifest, touching every level of society and church, through every age that followed.<sup>26</sup> Much of this occurred, in the words of Norman Cohn, "within the obscure underworld of popular religion," among "the underprivileged, the oppressed, the disoriented, and the unbalanced."<sup>27</sup> But it was not limited to these areas. Many among the educated and clergy were fascinated by eschatology and passionately endeavoured to unveil the secrets of biblical and extra-biblical<sup>28</sup> apocalyptic. The end of the first millennium produced a heightened interest in things apocalyptic<sup>29</sup> and even the crusades were, in many ways, driven by eschatological expectations and belief.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, apocalyptic eschatology remained of limited influence as the larger church continued on the course set by Augustine.

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<sup>26</sup> Cohn, *Pursuit*, pp. 30-35. *Apocalyptic Spirituality: Treatises and Letters of Lactantius, Adso of Montier-en-der, Joachim of Fiore, The Franciscan Spirituals, Savonarola*, trans. and intro. By Bernard McGinn (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), p. 21. Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study of Joachimism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), pp. 299-300. Boyer, p. 50. See also Bernard McGinn, *Visions of the end: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979).

<sup>27</sup> Cohn, *Pursuit*, p. 30. While Cohn is specifically describing medieval apocalypticism, this remains a fairly accurate assessment for most periods of the church's history.

<sup>28</sup> "Monastic scholars and the most erudite theologians contributed to, and often cited, the vast body of verse prophecies known collectively as the Sibylline oracles. Modeled on Greek, Roman, and Hellenistic Jewish writings, these literary works wove images from Daniel and Revelation into imaginative narratives that were revised periodically as historical circumstances changed" Boyer, p. 50. On the Sibylline oracles see Christopher Rowland, *Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (New York: Crossroads, 1982), p. 20.

<sup>29</sup> Abanes, *End-Time Visions*, pp.172-174. Damian Thompson, *The End of Time: Faith and Fear in the Shadow of the Millennium* (London: University Press of New England, 1996), pp. 35-55.

<sup>30</sup> Boyer, p. 51.

The visions of an Italian abbot once again forced apocalyptic eschatology to the surface of church life and reflection. Joachim de Fiore<sup>31</sup> (c. 1135-1202), described as the “most influential European until Karl Marx,”<sup>32</sup> and “the greatest medieval apocalyptic thinker,”<sup>33</sup> influenced not only his age and church, but, if Cohn is right, Adolph Hitler and his Third Reich. A night of meditating on the book of Revelation led Joachim to experience a vision that revealed to him the harmony of the Old and New Testaments<sup>34</sup> and provided a dispensational scheme of the nature of history. Joachim, responding to the encouragement of Pope Lucius III, recorded his vision and theories in three great works: *Exposition of the Apocalypse*, *Concordance of the Old and New Testaments*, and *Psaltry of Ten Strings*. These works made Joachim “something of a prophetic celebrity,”<sup>35</sup> and led to his meeting with four popes and numerous kings, queens, and emperors. Richard Coeur de Lion, having set forth in 1190 on the Third Crusade, consulted with Joachim, who told him that Saladin was Antichrist and his quest to expel him from Jerusalem, would succeed.<sup>36</sup>

Joachim introduced a tripartite reading of history in which time was broken into three overlapping periods each correlated to one member of the Trinity. The first, under the Father, was the period of the law and recorded in the Old Testament. The second, representing the Son, was the church age. Believing this began with the resurrection of Jesus and Pentecost, Joachim saw this as a period of grace that would last forty-two generations of thirty years and would end with the coming of the Antichrist in 1260. Joachim saw his own day as the period of transition between the second and third dispensations. This last period, under the image of the Holy Spirit, would bring reform and renewal to the church and lead to a kingdom of perfect peace and unity on earth,

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<sup>31</sup> See especially Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*. *Op.cit.*

<sup>32</sup> Yuri Rubinsky and Ian Wiseman, *A History of the End of the World* (New York:Quill, 1982), p. 77,

<sup>33</sup> Bernard McGinn, *Antichrist* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1994), p. 115.

<sup>34</sup> Boyer, p. 52.

<sup>35</sup> Abanes, p. 177.

<sup>36</sup> Boyer p. 51. Joachim was wrong. Richard was able to take Acre in 1191 but unable to wrest Jerusalem from Saladin, with whom he was forced to make a truce.



characterized by spiritual contemplation.<sup>37</sup> Upon Joachim's death, several religious orders arose claiming to be the manifestation of Joachim's third age and the very group he had prophesied would convert the world. Increasingly sectarian and fanatical incarnations of Joachim's system led to its condemnation at the Lateran Council of 1215 and by 1259 his writings had been universally declared heretical.

As a result of these movements, much of Joachim's thought was corrupted beyond recognition, making his actual influence difficult to assess. Nevertheless, Marjorie Reeves suggests several enduring legacies of his thought.<sup>38</sup> Joachim provided the church with a particular understanding of history that was optimistic and linear. This led obviously to more optimistic post-millennial views, but may have also shaped the pessimistic premillennialism of the Albury Circle who interpreted history as non-cyclical and moving toward a profoundly positive goal. Joachim foresaw a *renovatio mundi*, accompanied with an unprecedented outpouring of the Holy Spirit, ideas that would become—with important differences—essential elements of Albury's premillennial theology. Like the Albury Circle many years later, Joachim saw this golden third age not as a mere renewal of the church but the very goal of creation and the culmination of God's creative purpose. This consummation was not to occur beyond time, but in history, as its final dispensation. Finally, this *renovatio mundi* and the age under the Spirit would occur only "with the violent transfer of authority from the Babylonish church to the true one."<sup>39</sup> Again, these are points that mirror perspectives held by the Albury Circle.

Post Reformation and Puritan eschatology is perhaps the final significant historical influence in the shaping of Albury's premillennial system. Certainly Luther expected an imminent Parousia and interpreted his own day and reforming work in terms of the last days labour.<sup>40</sup> But the Reformers, holding to an Augustinian amillennialism, had little interest in determining either the progress or their particular point in the last days' chronology. But in the late sixteenth-century three works were published that

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<sup>37</sup> See Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*. Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, pp. 108-113. Boyer, *When Time Shall be no More*, p. 52.

<sup>38</sup> Reeves, p. 502.

<sup>39</sup> Reeves, p. 503.

<sup>40</sup> Boyer, p. 61-62.

would have great influence on apocalyptic millennialism: *The Geneva Bible*, John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*,<sup>41</sup> and *A Plaine Discussion of the Whole Revelation of St. John* by John Napier<sup>42</sup> (the inventor of logarithms). Each of these, in different ways, portrayed the Protestant Reformation as having played a significant role within the eschatological process. Napier went further, predicting the end would occur in 1688. The population, convinced perhaps by the upheaval of civil war and regicide, was open enough to the idea to see twenty-three printings of his work. These had the effect of convincing English Divines to understand their lives, day, and nation as uniquely ordained to play a role in last day events. England was now perceived as the focal point of God's eschatological consummation.

## 2. The Rising Voice of Prophecy

### a) *Prophecy's Rosetta Stone: The French Revolution*

The French Revolution was the single greatest catalyst behind the development of modern apocalyptic premillennialism. Sandeen has correctly noted, "The French Revolution was directly responsible for the revival of prophetic concern. To live through the decade of the 1790s in itself constituted an experience in apocalypticism for many of the British."<sup>43</sup> The cataclysm of the French Revolution convinced many, particularly in Protestant Britain, that they were living in the last days. Republicanism had overthrown monarchical institutions and with them all sense of stability, real or illusory. In six months the Terrors erased a hundred years of confidence in human advancement under the guide of reason, and "the best of all possible worlds" teetered before *bouleversement*.

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<sup>41</sup> John Foxe, *Actes and Monuments* (London: John Day, 1563).

<sup>42</sup> John Napier, *A Plaine Discussion of the Whole Revelation of St. John* (Edinburgh: Robert Walde-groue, 1593).

<sup>43</sup> Sandeen, *Roots*, p.5. Earlier Sandeen had noted: "Although millenarianism in western thought has a long history, it is a discontinuous one. The modern revival of millenarianism originated in the era of the French Revolution, and there has seemed no need to retreat further [into history]." (p. xviii).

-Chapter One-  
The Rising Voice of Prophecy & the Founding of *The Morning Watch*

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If poets perceived in these events a source of joy,<sup>44</sup> the times were even more exhilarating for students of prophecy, who saw in the 1790's the literal unfolding of the prophecies in Daniel 7 and Revelation 13. These passages foresaw a 1260 "day"<sup>45</sup> reign of the beast, which Protestants easily equated with the papacy. The faithfulness of the church's early centuries, they held, had dissolved with the Code of Justinian, hurling the church into the 1260 years of the antichristian apostasy of Rome. The events surrounding the French Revolution were seen as the fulfillment of prophetic truth and 1793<sup>46</sup> the consummation of the 1260 "days," as France broke free of the Pope, confiscated church lands, and established the Cult of Reason. Those who saw in this upheaval the beginning of God's judgment on Christendom, looked in awe as Napoleon sent troops against Rome, declaring it a republic and consummating his decree by exiling Pius VI to southern France where he would die a year later. "The identification of the events of the 1790's with those prophesied in Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 provided biblical commentators with a prophetic Rosetta stone. At last a key had been found with which to crack the code."<sup>47</sup> The French Revolution had dealt the papacy the prophesied "mortal wound," and in an unusual display of unity, prophecy experts agreed that the world had entered its last days.<sup>48</sup>

The French Revolution gave Irving and his circle more than chronological triangulation. The Revolution confirmed a particular philosophy of history and with it a corresponding hermeneutic. The French Revolution was interpreted as the literal fulfill-

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<sup>44</sup> "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, but to be young was very heaven." Wordsworth, quoted in Bernard M. G. Reardon, *Religion in the Age of Romanticism*, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>45</sup> Following a practice that had become standard since proposed by Joseph Mede in 1631, "days," "weeks," and "months" were interpreted as "prophetic years." Thus, a week in prophecy referred to seven years, a prophetic month to thirty, etc. The forty-two months of Revelation 13:5 were calculated to 1260 "days" and thus, years.

<sup>46</sup> The dating favoured by *The Morning Watch* saw fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy as occurring in this year rather than 1789 or other possible dates. This is based on their belief that this period began with the Code of Justinian given in 533. Others, using similar methods but different reference points, reached alternative dates. Edward King, for example, writing in 1798 concluded that this very year marked as "1,260 years ago, in the very beginning of the year 538, *Belisarius* put an end to the Empire, and Dominion of the Goths, at Rome." Edward King, *Remarks on the Signs of the Times* (London, 1798), quoted in L. E. Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers* (Washington, D. C., 1948), 2:767.

<sup>47</sup> Sandeen, *Roots*, p. 8.

<sup>48</sup> Albury concurred: "The structure of the book [of Revelation] also ties us down to the French Revolution as the time when these judgments began" (*TMW* 1:553.5—December 1829).

ment of God's prophetic word. The Bible came then, to be viewed as a script and history the stage upon which it was played. As such, the French Revolution—and indeed, every event in history—could only be properly discerned from the perspective of prophetic revelation, as an element of it. The contents and course of history, under the defining parameters of Biblical prophecy, became the place of God's revelation.

### *b) Prophecy and Professional Exegetes*

Events in France revealed for the first time where the church stood in the prophetic calendar. The French Revolution and its effects took on an interpretive imminence as prophecy scholars perceived in these events the key to the prophetic calendar and the means of correlating spiritual realities and historical events as they unfolded in the last days. The culture became enflamed with prophetic interest and demand created a boom in prophetic publishing.

Individual exegetes of the highest caliber endeavoured to interpret the times and correlate them to the prophecies of Scripture. Yet the character of their work differed from that which would later arise at Albury. For the most part, these men represent a first generation millennialism, whose interest lay closer to apocalypticism than later premillennial systems. Earlier professional exegetes, like prophecy scholars before the French Revolution, were more interested in the principles involved than dates and details. Prophecy studies immediately following the Revolution, tended to focus more on the “big picture,” and the ideals involved behind the grand episodes of history. Little interest was shown in the minutia of details that would later fascinate the Albury Circle, and relatively little attempt made toward systematic structures built around the prophetic worldview. Additionally, these scholars, while aware of one another's works—and often critical of them—nevertheless drew their conclusions in relative isolation.

Joseph Priestly, a Presbyterian clergyman and scientist—perhaps better known in theology for his Arian Christology and founding of the Unitarian Society, and in science for his “discovery” of oxygen—preached on “the present state of Europe compared

with the Ancient prophecies” on the Fast Day of 1794.<sup>49</sup> Cleary Priestly had caught the prophetic excitement of the times. Through pamphlets and sermons, he described the Revolution as the “earthquake” described in Revelation II:3—a theme which will be repeated in *The Morning Watch*—and predicted infidelity in France would probably advance to ultimately obliterate faith. This rising infidelity was itself a sign that earthly history was near its end which would occur with the imminent Second Coming. Perhaps most remarkable is Priestly’s understanding of the Jews and his belief that their restoration to their ancient land was not merely a point of prophetic expectation, but an intimate part of God’s revelation and shaping of a people who would know and follow him faithfully. Priestly held that England’s most noble destiny lay in the service she would render to those he saw as “the elder branch of the family,”<sup>50</sup> a concept that was to be championed by Lewis Way of the Albury Circle, and eventually influence Lord Shaftsbury, Balfour and thus Britain’s Palestinian policy through the Victorian era and into the next century.

James Bicheno, dissenting minister and schoolmaster at Newbury, Berkshire, began writing on prophecy before the dust of the French Revolution had settled and continued these labours for twenty-four years. His first work, *The Signs of the Times*, published in 1793, went through five editions in less than ten years. Virulently anti-Catholic, Bicheno identified the papacy with Antichrist and saw Louis XIV as “the beast which John saw coming up out of the earth.”<sup>51</sup> The Revolution, while evil, was portrayed as playing a positive role in God’s apocalyptic economy, as the papacy and religious oppression were overcome. Though influenced by Priestly, Bicheno was far less optimistic when contemplating Britain’s place in the events to come. Britain, he held, in attempting to restore the *ancien régime*, was in danger of collaborating with Antichrist. The end of the fourth Danielic monarchy had arrived and Britain’s only hope of avoiding the wrath that would accompany its fall lay in national repentance. “We are a guilty

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<sup>49</sup> Joseph Priestly, *Two Sermons, viz. I. The Present State of Europe Compared with the Ancient Prophecies . . . II. The Rise of Christianity, Especially in Difficult times*, (Philadelphia, 1794).

<sup>50</sup> Joseph Priestly, *Letters from Dr. Priestly to the Jews; Inviting Them to an Amiable Discussion of the Evidences of Christianity* (New York, 1794), p. 9.

<sup>51</sup> James Bicheno, *The Signs of the Times: or the Overthrow of the Papal Tyranny in France, the Prelude to the Destruction of Popery and Despotism, but of Peace to Mankind*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition (London, 1794), p. iv.

people, and it cannot be repeated too often, that nothing but a speedy repentance, personal and national; nothing but a thorough reformation, political and moral, can give us any hope of a long security from calamities most awful."<sup>52</sup> These themes will find repeated and passionate articulation across the pages of *The Morning Watch*.

The role of Britain in the last days, and especially regarding the nation's relationship with the Jews, continued to be a point of debate among apocalyptic exegetes. In 1798, Edward King published his *Remarks on the Signs of the Times*,<sup>53</sup> suggesting the turbid reference of a maritime people of Isaiah 18 referred to France. Samuel Horsley, Bishop, scholar, and member of the Royal Society who had published in 1785 a ten volume collection of Isaac Newton's Works, replied,<sup>54</sup> stating the restoration of the Jews was an event wholly bound to the second coming and the mysterious nation foreseen by the prophet lay beyond identification. Nevertheless, it was almost certainly not France, whose atheistic democracy had proven it an arm of Antichrist. Nelson's victory at Trafalgar appears to have provided Horsley with helpful illumination on the prophetic text. In his Trafalgar Day sermon, *The Watchers and the Holy Ones*,<sup>55</sup> Horsley suggests that Britain may indeed hold a special place in God's plan, but this is to lead the nation not to pride and certainty, but humility and fear. Drawing even closer to the thought of *The Morning Watch*, Horsley believed that the last days would be characterized by a fraudulent and apostate church. The true church, instead, would exist as a tiny, faithful, and persecuted remnant.

One of the most important of professional exegetes was George Stanley Faber. Writing widely on a number of theological subjects, his interest and passion was nevertheless bound to prophecy. His writing on the subject extends from 1799 until 1853, the year before his death. The changes occurring in these years required Faber to continually adjust the details of his prophetic exegesis, even as he remained essentially con-

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<sup>52</sup> James Bicheno, *A Word in Season: or a Call to the Inhabitants of Great Britain, to Stand Prepared for the Consequences of the Present War*, (London, 1795), pp. 43-44.

<sup>53</sup> Edward King, *Remarks on the Signs of the Times* (London: G. Nicol, 1798).

<sup>54</sup> Samuel Horsley, *Critical Disquisitions on the Eighteenth Chapter of Isaiah, in a Letter to Edward King* (London, 1799).

<sup>55</sup> Samuel Horsley, *The Watchers and the Holy Ones* (London, 1806).

-Chapter One-  
The Rising Voice of Prophecy & the Founding of *The Morning Watch*

sistent to the principles first stated in *Two Sermons*, published in 1799.<sup>56</sup> Faber's thoughts on prophecy revolve around five concepts: recent events in France, the history of the papacy, the Ottoman Empire, the restoration of the Jews to their homeland, and the role of England in the last days.<sup>57</sup> With others, Faber interpreted events in France in cosmic terms. The papacy, for all its evil, was not to be identified with Antichrist, but rather with the growing infidelity occurring in France. Faber encouraged the growing futurist understanding of millennialism by describing the Antichrist as wholly future, rising from the godlessness and apostasy that was sweeping France, not as a person but as a godless principle or nation. Faber emphasized both the imminence and futurity of prophetic expectations that saw the restoration of the Jews and the Antichrist as coming events in the prophetic calendar.

Faber's works, especially his *Sacred Calendar*,<sup>58</sup> were favourably reviewed by the men of Albury.<sup>59</sup> This highly "scientific" dialogue with Faber on the dating of the prophecies is important for several reasons: First, it shows the rationalistic and scientific discourse that pervaded the "first generation" of millennial studies occurring immediately following the French Revolution. Second, following on this, it shows *The Morning Watch*'s second-generation character, a transition point between the first and third generation, i.e. that of Mede, Priestly, Bicheno, Faber, etc. and that of Darby and contemporary premillennialism. And third, this review illustrates the journal's increasing interest in dating, on the premise that foundational chronologies are necessary before any calculations regarding their fulfillment might be made. *The Morning Watch* concluded that studies such as Faber's are the "chiefest desiderata in the present state of prophecy studies," but turned their interests from his generalities to the myriad of details by which these might be known and evidenced.

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<sup>56</sup> George Stanley Faber, *Two Sermons Preached Before the University of Oxford Feb. 10, 1799* (Oxford, 1799).

<sup>57</sup> Oliver, p. 57.

<sup>58</sup> George Stanley Faber, *Sacred Calendar of Prophecy*, 3 vols. (London, 1828).

<sup>59</sup> *TMW* V:161-78—March 1832. The review concludes by stating Mr. Faber's chronology must be "lowered by 224 or 225 years."



-Chapter One-  
The Rising Voice of Prophecy & the Founding of *The Morning Watch*

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An important and central theme within *The Morning Watch* is the restoration of the Jews and the champion of this cause was the eccentric Lewis Way.<sup>60</sup> Trained as a barrister, Way suddenly and surprisingly inherited three hundred thousand pounds from one John Way, who though not related, was intrigued by the similarity of their names. Way, “released from the bondage of an irksome profession,” purchased Stanstead Park near Emsworth, Sussex, and dedicated himself to meeting the obligations of a gentleman. In 1811, while visiting Devonshire, he was told of a stand of oaks that were to remain uncut until the restoration of Israel to Palestine.<sup>61</sup> Fascinated, Way “began to investigate both the ancient prophecies relating to the restoration of the Jews and contemporary agencies that were devoting their attention to this problem.”<sup>62</sup> His research uncovered a struggling organization founded by a converted Jew and called The London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews (LSPCJ). Way, having become by this time an Anglican clergyman, effectively took over the LSPCJ in 1815, paying off its twelve thousand pound debt and making its work his vocation. The Stanstead Park estate was made a training center for the preparing of missionaries to the Jews. While this bore few results,<sup>63</sup> the society was quite successful in promoting the cause of Protestant Zionism, as the society’s monthly journal, the *Jewish Expositor*, and dozens of related books, ensured the cause remained before the public eye. The full restoration of the Jews, with the conclusion of the 1260 days at the French Revolution, and the imminent return of Christ, became the three great events to occur in the last days and core elements of pre-millennial dogma. Ironically, the very issue that had brought the cause of the Jews to prominence would lead to Way’s separation from the LSPCJ. Way took an increasingly strong stance on the premillennial return of Christ and the corresponding belief that the

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<sup>60</sup> That such interests were not isolated to Way, may be seen in James Bicheno, *The Restoration of the Jews, the Crisis of the Nations* (London: Johnson, 1800). See Boyer 182f for history of the restoration of the Jews and Sandeen, 9-12 and Oliver, 91 and elsewhere, on Way.

<sup>61</sup> A. M. Sterling, *The Ways of Yesterday...Chronicles of the Way Family from 1307-1885* (London, 1930), pp. 115-117.

<sup>62</sup> Sandeen, p. 10.



-Chapter One-  
The Rising Voice of Prophecy & the Founding of *The Morning Watch*

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Jews would not be converted before this event. These beliefs, Way brought to the table at Albury where they were received and made a central part of the Circle's systematic premillennialism.

Henry Drummond, one of the most influential of the Albury Circle, was well known, not only in Christian circles but business and politics. The grandson of Henry Dundas, Viscount Melville, Drummond had become successful in both banking and as a member of the House of Commons. Opinions were not wholly positive, however. Carlyle described Drummond as

A man of elastic pungent decisive nature; full of fine qualities and capabilities,—but will nigh cracked with an enormous conceit of himself, which, both as pride and vanity (in strange partnership, mutually agreeable), seemed to pervade every fiber of him, and render his life a restless inconsistency: that was the feeling he left in me; nor did it alter afterwards, when I saw a great deal more of him,—without sensible increase or diminution of the little love he first inspired in me.<sup>63</sup>

Drummond, “satiated with the empty frivolities of the fashionable world,”<sup>64</sup> had turned his attention to Christian work. Traveling to Geneva, he strove to restore evangelical purity to the city of Calvin. Excoriating the Socinian doctrine of the church authorities, he encouraged separatist ministers to form an alternative body, founding and underwriting the Continental Society for their support. Drummond returned to England and became interested in Irving, particularly when his preaching turned to the premillennial advent of Christ.

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<sup>63</sup> Only one student, Joseph Wolff, “a flamboyant Prussian Jew who became an Anglican after having previously become a convert to Catholicism, could play the role of the missionary hero; and he, it must be said, played it with such flair that one suspects he must have been half adventurer and impostor” Sandeen, p. 11. *The Morning Watch* frequently published reports of Wolff's travels and his letters from the field. See Hurly Pring Palmer, *Joseph Wolff: His Romantic Life and Travels* (London: Heath Cranton, 1935) and Joseph Wolff, *Researches and Missionary Labours Among the Jews, Mohammedans, and other Sects* (Philadelphia: O. Rogers, 1837).

<sup>64</sup> T. Carlyle, *Reminiscences* (London: Dent edn., 1972), p. 294. Carlyle remained unimpressed, describing a dinner at Drummonds Belgrave Square home in August 1831: “This Drummond proved to be a very striking man, taller and leaner than I, but erect as a plummet, with a high-carried, quick, penetrating head, some five and forty years of age, a singular mixture of all things—of saint, the wit, the philosopher—swimming, if I mistake not, in an element of dandyism. His dinner was dandicalcal in the extreme: a meagre series of pretentious kickshaws, on which no hungry jaw could satisfactorily bite, flunkies on all hands, yet I had to ask four times before I could get a morsel of bread.” Other guests included Irving, John Tudor, Spencer Perceval, M.P. Quoted in A. L. Drummond, *Irving*, p. 126.

<sup>65</sup> Quoted in A. L. Drummond, *Irving*, p. 126.

In addition to underwriting the Albury Circle and *The Morning Watch*, Henry Drummond contributed an important intellectual element to the premillennial matrix. Combining his political and theological perspectives, Drummond had developed the idea of the “apostate nation” which was to play a profound role in Albury’s theology. The concept describes a people called and particularly gifted by God who in turn reject their responsibilities and the mandate they demand. Great Britain had been, in Drummond’s opinion, “more favoured than any spot on the whole earth with the number of preachers of God’s word” and had been “selected by Jehovah to be his witness against the Popish Apostasy.” Britain’s fall from both favour and call, evidenced in the decline of the church, expansion of democracy, ambivalence toward Catholicism, placed his nation in the likes of Sodom and Gomorrah and led Drummond to grieve “at the thought of how many talents Britain has to answer for.”<sup>66</sup>

Prior to the mid-1820s, these, and many other prophecy scholars, remained largely isolated. But from 1825-26, as prophetic interest burgeoned, an unprecedented dynamic occurred as individual strands coalesced, allowing, for the first time, the creation of a systematic, universal, premillennial theology. From 1826, numerous prophetic gatherings took place uniting the principle scholars. In this year the Society for the Investigation of Prophecy was founded by James Hatley Frere who invited Edward Irving, Thomas White, and James Stratton to join him. In 1828 this group published papers contributed by John Tudor, Henry Drummond, Dr. Thompson, T. W. Chevalier, and Thomas White.<sup>67</sup> After 1829 William Marsh—known as “Millennial Marsh”—held an annual prophecy conference at his parish, with the intention of a broader outreach. Edward Bickersteth, a highly respected evangelical became interested in millennialism during Advent 1832 and entertained Cuninghame of Lainshaw<sup>68</sup> annually at his rectory. “These yearly visits were made the occasion for local prophetic conferences”<sup>69</sup> In 1842 the Prophecy Investigation Society was founded. Said to have had 50 members in the

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<sup>66</sup> Henry Drummond, *A Defense of the Students of Prophecy* (London: James Nisbet, 1828), p. 115.

<sup>67</sup> *Papers Read before the Society for the Investigation of Prophecy* (London, 1828).

<sup>68</sup> Working as a passionate and independent prophecy commentator, “this acerbic Scot probably did a good deal to raise the polemical temperature in the 1820s”. Cuninghame participated in the Albury Conferences but remained fiercely independent and critical of his colleagues. See Oliver, p. 92.

-Chapter One-  
The Rising Voice of Prophecy & the Founding of *The Morning Watch*

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1860s, it met twice a year for a three day conference and sponsored a Lenten series on millennialism held at St. George Church, Bloomsbury, London. Others, including the Powerscourt Conferences in Ireland, the Mildmay conferences in Britain, and the Niagara and Northfield conferences in North America would rise to influence and shape premillennial interests.

With the French Revolution being perceived as a prophetic marker, students of prophecy, had, from the end of the eighteenth century began turning their attention from generalities to specifics. Gradually, interest turned from the *acts of God* over history to the acts of God at *the end of history*. Prophetic interest expanded from historicist interpretation to futurist speculation, as current affairs became increasingly linked to the prophesied events of last days. Interpretive interest shifted from unique epiphanic events to the revelatory character of the whole of history and its prophetic message for what came to be seen as the culmination of creation and God's will. The Albury Circle became the meeting point of multiple prophetic vectors and is the point at which the modern shape of premillennialism was given its primary characteristics. *The Morning Watch*, the Circle's disseminating vehicle, lies is at the very center of this change in terms of chronology, definition, and dissemination.<sup>70</sup>

### 3. The Streams Cohere: Irving, Albury, and *The Morning Watch*

#### a) Edward Irving: *The Prophet in a Geneva Gown*

The greatest change to premillennial theology was effected early in 1825 when Edward Irving met James Hatley Frere and heard from him of the premillennial return of Christ. Irving reminisced that while he "had heretofore paid little respect to the promise of his coming," he now was able, "to cast aside the traditions upon this subject

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<sup>69</sup> Sandeen, p. 25.

<sup>70</sup> "The activist post-millennialism of the establishment men, full of zeal but essentially cool, was challenged in the early 1820's by an upsurge of premillennialism, fervent and excitable, passive in that it advised waiting upon God, but strident in its conviction that God was due to act soon. This rose to a climax with the Albury school." Oliver, *Prophets and Millennialists*, p. 91.

which I had received from the fathers,” and move into new territory.<sup>71</sup> From this point, Irving became passionately committed to the premillennial worldview, ever endeavouring to break open its codes, ever loving “to see an idea looming through the mist.” Coleridge, too, indirectly influenced Irving's premillennialism, encouraging him, in Irving's words, to discard, “that error under which the whole of the Church is lying, that the present world is to be converted unto the Lord, and so slide by natural inclination into the church—the present reign of Satan hastening, of its own accord, into the millennial reign of Christ.”<sup>72</sup> Irving's impetuous personality and unmitigated passion led him to abandon all doubt, and from 1825 until his death in 1834, Irving's gaze never strayed from the premillennial hope nor his labours from explicating and proclaiming its message.

While Irving's introduction to the subject came through Frere, it was his independent study of Scripture that removed all doubt. Soon he had published his first work on the subject: *Babylon and Infidelity Foredoomed*.<sup>73</sup> The summer of 1826 was spent translating the millenarian treatise of Chilean Jesuit, Manuel Lacunza, *The Coming of the Messiah in Glory and Majesty*. The details of this work, though never fully accepted by British premillennialists of the time, or even Irving, nevertheless provided important insights that profoundly affected the approach of the Albury Circle. This was perhaps helped by the perceived role providence played in bringing this work to Irving. Knowing nothing of Spanish a few months before he was sent a copy, Irving had sought to learn the language in order help a group of Spanish refugees. That the book had arrived just as he was learning Spanish, combined with its premillennial contents and the fact that it came from the Catholic “underground,”<sup>74</sup> convinced Irving it was part of a

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<sup>71</sup> Edward Irving, *The Rev. Edward Irving's Preliminary Discourse to the Work of Ben Ezra; Entitled The Coming of the Messiah in Glory and Majesty. To Which is Added, An Ordination Charge Delivered by Mr. Irving in 1827; and also his Introductory Essay to Bishop Home's Commentary on the Psalms* (London: Bosworth & Harrison, 1859), p. 3.

<sup>72</sup> Quoted in Margaret Oliphant, *The Life of Edward Irving, Minister of the National Scotch Church, London*, 5th edition (London: Hurst and Bleckett, Publishers, n. d.) pp. 190-91. It should be noted that Coleridge rejected Irving's premillennialism.

<sup>73</sup> Edward Irving, *Babylon and Infidelity Foredoomed* (Glasgow: 1826). Contains a dedication to J. H. Frere, thanking for the introduction and education in the ways of biblical prophecy. This work was originally a sermon preached before the Continental Society.

-Chapter One-  
The Rising Voice of Prophecy & the Founding of *The Morning Watch*

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came from the Catholic “underground,”<sup>74</sup> convinced Irving it was part of a larger, divine plan.

Irving’s studies led to three groundbreaking conclusions. First, Christendom—no longer isolated to Catholic France but now including Britain—was under judgment “because of its hypocrisies, idolatries, superstitions, infidelity, and enormous wickedness.”<sup>75</sup> Second, when finished with the Gentile church, the Lord “will turn his Holy Spirit unto his ancient people, the Jews, and bring unto them those days of refreshing spoken of by all the holy prophets.”<sup>76</sup> This separation of the Jew and Gentile was viewed by Irving as “the root and germ”<sup>77</sup> of two distinct dispensations through which God exercised his witness to humanity. Finally, “These judgments upon the Gentile nations, and all the earth, he will finish by his own personal appearance.”<sup>78</sup> These three conclusions, spelled out in December 1826 in his introduction to *The Coming of the Messiah in Glory and Majesty*, form the foundation of Albury’s imminent adventism.<sup>79</sup>

The coming judgments may be understood only by grasping God’s plan for his chosen people, first the Jews and then the Church. Each plays similar, yet distinct, roles in God’s economy of electing a people to proclaim his Word. In spite of faithful adherents scattered through history, the Jews were viewed as failed in their calling, having “refused the succession of spiritual witnesses, and crucified the faithful and true witness. . . and rejected the Holy Spirit of witness poured out in their chief city and upon their countrymen.” This failure led to the “casting away of this nation,”<sup>80</sup> and God’s subsequent turning to a new elect people. Tragically, the church had, with the establishment of the papacy, similarly fallen from its calling and stood therefore under judgment. In light of their unique historical setting, Irving, with most contemporary students of

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<sup>74</sup> Sandeen, p. 19. Lacunza had written the work under the Jewish pseudonym Ben Ezra.

<sup>75</sup> Irving, *Preliminary Discourse to Ben-Ezra*, p. 5.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> Irving, *Preliminary Discourse to Ben-Ezra*, p. 11.

<sup>78</sup> Irving, *Preliminary Discourse to Ben-Ezra*, p. 6.

<sup>79</sup> The influence of Lacunza (and fellow Jesuits Alcazar and Reberia) upon nineteenth century millennialism may prove profound, but must lay beyond the grasp of this study.

<sup>80</sup> Irving, *Preliminary Discourse to Ben-Ezra*, p. 12.

prophecy, saw this as having already begun with the French Revolution. Adopting a modified historicist perspective Irving perceived his own day as on the very edge of the final cataclysm when the seventh trumpet, bowl, and vial would together be turned upon unfaithful Christendom.

This culmination of history raised profound questions: how was God to fulfill his election of the Jews and deliver the faithful within Christendom in the midst of unparalleled disaster; would these too face the wrath that is imminent? Irving's answer is roughly stated in his introduction to the *Coming of the Messiah*. As God cast away the Jews for their unfaithfulness, so he was about to do the same to the Gentile church that also had failed. Through his war against the ungodly and Satan's being bound in the process, the Jews would find fresh opportunity to return to God and consummate their original call and destiny. As for the faithful within the church, Irving asks

What is to become of those spiritual witnesses, who since the calling of Abraham have been raised up in the likeness of Christ Jesus, to preserve the testimony of the righteousness which is by faith in his blood? What is to become of this elect church that have suffered, before his incarnation and since his incarnation, by the same eternal Spirit, and for the same end of the Father's glory for which he suffered? To this I answer, that the whole scripture, from the beginning to the ending of it, doth testify that they shall come with Christ to be partakers of his glory, that he may be glorified in them in whom also he was dishonoured; and that they may be the sharers of that throne and kingdom, and power, whereof he hath the promise from the Father, and is now expecting the fulfilment. These are the dead, who shall hear the voice of the Son of God and live. These are they who shall be changed. These are they who shall meet the Lord in the air, and reign with him on the earth.<sup>81</sup>

This statement sets forth in embryonic form what Irving and the members of Albury will in the next few years expand into a second-generation statement of premillennial theology in which the doctrine of a pretribulational rapture plays a significant role. But key elements exist even at this early stage: God's dealings with the Jews and the Gentiles are viewed as occurring in two distinct dispensations; the church, or at least a majority portion, is viewed as apostate; a coming judgment of unprecedented magnitude is imminent, and finally the faithful witnesses of both the Jewish and Christian eras will receive a special place in Christ's coming kingdom through their resurrection or being "changed." The "translation of the saints" has here received greater definition than ei-

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<sup>81</sup> Irving, *ibid.*, p. 14.

ther the tribulation or the chronological relation between the two. Yet over the next three years these concepts will each gain fuller elaboration and greater systematic integration within a larger apocalyptic chronology. Though not the first mention of the rapture in church history, it is arguably the beginning of the nineteenth century's formulating it into a central part of the premillennial system.<sup>82</sup>

Other details emerge as well from *Ben-Ezra* that will find later elaboration in *The Morning Watch*. Having concluded the church is in a near state of apostasy, Irving expresses his belief that her revival was to be found in prophecy studies. Only through prophecy would the church learn to lift its gaze from a "shadowy" and "unworldly" understanding of a heavenly goal, that "continual turning of the church's eye to this undefined and undefinable estate has paralyzed hope and quenched desire, crippled all the energies of the spiritual man, and impoverished every field of spiritual life."<sup>83</sup> Irving saw in millennial doctrine a true and living spirituality that could breath new life into the church's faith and doctrines. He "argued, at length and with vehemence, that millennialism was spiritually satisfying, while current Christian orthodoxy was not."<sup>84</sup> Eternal realities begin to be defined in more material terms as the believer's attention was turned from the ethereal and otherworldly to the Kingdom of God on Earth. The felicity of heaven was brought to earth and the person of Christ warmly humanized.

Irving finished his (lengthy) preface to *Ben-Ezra* by announcing the recent conclusion of conference on prophecy studies where he had been in attendance. Here, just weeks after the gathering, Irving described, with great excitement, the details of the first Albury Conference on Prophecy.

### *b) The Albury Conferences and the Founding of The Morning Watch*

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<sup>82</sup> While Victorinus in the fourth century, Joseph Mede of the seventeenth, and Increase Mather in the eighteenth may have held a pretribulation doctrine these appear to have made little impact on nineteenth-century eschatology.

<sup>83</sup> Irving, *Preliminary Discourse to Ben-Ezra*, cboxii. Irving rejects any sense of a separate state following death and seems to hold to a doctrine of psychopannychy. Believers will awake at the first resurrection and arise with the faithful to meet Christ in the air.

<sup>84</sup> Oliver, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

-Chapter One-  
The Rising Voice of Prophecy & the Founding of *The Morning Watch*

In Advent of 1826, Drummond invited about twenty clergy and laymen—all involved in prophecy studies and many associated with Continental Society or LSPCJ—to his Albury Park estate in Surrey for a week of detailed discussion on prophecy. The Albury conferences, meeting annually for the next three years, “brought together almost every British millenarian scholar of note and created a context in which they could reinforce their central convictions and isolate and clarify the issues on which they disagreed.”<sup>85</sup>

It is difficult to determine precisely who attended the Albury conferences. No minutes were kept and the details of the meetings were withheld by mutual consent. Additionally, while lists of attendees exist, none perfectly agree. Nevertheless, the following represents an accurate if not perfect membership:<sup>86</sup>

Clergy	Laity
The Rev. G. Beckett, Church of England	Mr. J. Bayford, Church of England, Proctor in Doctor's Commons
The Rev. W. Bryan, Church of England	Mr. T. Borthwick, later member of Parliament
The Rev. H. F. Burder, Independent, Hackney, London	Mr. T. W. Chevalier, London surgeon
The Rev. T. W. Cole, Church of England, Vicar of Waners, Surrey	Mr. W. Cunningham, Presbyterian
The Rev. W. Dodsworth, Margaret Chapel, London	Mr. H. Drummond, Church of England, banker, Landowner, Member of Parliament
The Rev. W. Dow, Presbyterian, Minister of Tongland	Mr. J. H. Frere, Church of England, civil servant in the Army Office
The Rev. C. Hawtre	Capt. G. Gambier, Church of England, later Admiral
The Rev. J. Hawtre, Methodist	Mr. A. Haldane, Editor of <i>The Record</i>
The Rev. J. Hooper	Mr. W. Leach, member of the Board of Control
The Rev. E. Irving, Presbyterian, Minister of Caldonian Chapel, Hatton Garden, London	Lieut. Malden, Church of England, son of the Rev. T. W. Cole
The Rev. H. B. Maclean, Presbyterian, Minister, London Wall Church	Lord Mandeville, Church of England,
The Rev. H. McNeile, Church of England, Rector of Albury	
The Rev. W. Marsh, Vicar of St. Peter's, Colchester	
The Rev. Dr. Okeley, Moravian, Shoe Lane Chapel, London	
The Rev. H. J. Owen, Church of England, Minister of Park Chapel, Chelsea, London	

<sup>85</sup> Sandeen, p. 18.

<sup>86</sup> This list is primarily taken from Columba Graham Flegg, *'Gathered Under Apostles' a Study of the Catholic Apostolic Church* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1992), p. 37f. Henry Drummond, *Narrative of Circumstances which led to the setting up of the Church of Albury* (n.p. 1834). Ernest Sandeen, *Roots*, p. 20, n. 32. C. W. Boase, *Supplementary Narrative to the Elijah Ministry* (Edinburgh: Grant, 1868). J. H. Bransby, *Evan's Sketch of the Various Denominations of the Christian World* (London: 1841). See also Robert H. Story, *Memoir of the Life of the Rev. Robert Story* (Cambridge, 1862), pp. 102-4; Wolf, *Travels and Adventures*, p. 234; and Joshua W. Brooks, *A Dictionary of Writers on the Prophecies* (London, 1835), p. boxi.



-Chapter One-  
**The Rising Voice of Prophecy & the Founding of *The Morning Watch***

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The Rev. G. W. Phillips, from the United States	later Duke of Manchester
The Rev. W. Probyn, Church of England, Archdeacon of Landaff	Mr. S. Perceval, Church of England, son of former Prime Minister
The Rev. J. Simons, Church of England, Rector, St. Paul's Cray	Mr. E. Simon, Church of England, Director of the Jew's Asylum, London
The Rev. R. Story, Presbyterian, Minister of Rosneath, Scotland	Mr. Staples
The Rev. J. H. Stewart, Anglican, Minister of Percy Chapel, London	The Hon. J. J. Strutt, Church of England, later Member of Parliament, subsequently Lord Rayleigh
The Rev. J. Stratton, Independent, Paddington, London	Mr. R. Sumner
The Rev. E. T. Vaughan, Church of England, Vicar, St. Mary's, Leicester	
The Rev. J. White, Baker Street Chapel, London	
The Rev. Dr. Wilson, Church of England, later Bishop of Calcutta	
The Rev. R. Wolfe, Church of England, Rector of Crawley	
The Rev. R. Wolfe, jr., Church of England, Curate of Albury	
The Rev. J. Wolff, Church of England, Missionary to the Jews	

In closing his introduction to Ben-Ezra, Irving described the proceedings of the first Albury Conference on Prophecy. Guests rose early and assembled at 8:00 A .M. to hear an address on the topic of the day. Breakfast was held at 9:00 A .M. after which attendees turned to private study of the Scriptures, seeking evidence to support or refute the conclusions made earlier. From 11:00 A .M. until 3:00 or 4:00 P. M. they gathered to discuss their differences and draw conclusions upon which they might agree. Evenings were filled in building a synthesis of premillennial doctrines.

Drummond, in 1829 published a three-volume work entitled *Dialogues on Prophecy* that appears as synthesis of the three Albury prophecy conferences expressed in the form of an ancient Greek philosophical discussion. The participants are identified only by pseudonyms and the work appears to have been carefully edited by Drummond. Nevertheless, the content of these volumes corresponds exactly to the list of topics Irving stated the group had covered and may be seen as a general overview of the discussions held at Albury. Drummond summarized six cardinal points on which the participants were in agreement

That the current dispensation or age of the church was not to pass insensibly into the millennial state by gradual increase of the preaching of the Gospel; but that it is to be terminated by judgments, ending in the destruction of this visible Church and polity, in the same manner as the Jewish dispensation had been terminated.

That during the time that these judgments are falling upon Christendom, the Jews will be restored to their own land.

-Chapter One-  
The Rising Voice of Prophecy & the Founding of *The Morning Watch*

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That the judgments will fall principally, if not exclusively, upon Christendom, and begin with that part of the church of God which has been most highly favoured, and is therefore most deeply responsible.

That the termination of these judgments is to be succeeded by that period of universal blessedness to all mankind, and even to the beasts, which is commonly called the Millennium.

That the second Advent of Messiah precedes or takes place at the commencement of the Millennium.

That a great period of 1260 years commenced in the reign of Justinian, and terminated at the French Revolution; and that the vials of the Apocalypse began then to be poured out; that our blessed Lord will shortly appear, and that therefore it is the duty of all, who so believe, to press these considerations on the attention of all men.<sup>87</sup>

With its third meeting in 1828, the members of the Albury Circle agreed to establish a quarterly journal of theology for the propagation of the premillennial gospel. Inspired by Isaiah 21:11-12, the journal was christened *The Morning Watch* and, aided by Drummond's generous financial support, was produced to the highest standard, using the finest paper and printing methods available. Excellent editorship was found in the Welshman, John Tudor, who served the journal throughout its publication, and who, with Irving, contributed the lion's share of its articles. The first edition appeared less than four months later, in March of 1829 and over the next three and a half years the contributors would publish over three hundred articles covering almost four thousand pages.<sup>88</sup> Each issue was divided into three main parts. The first dealt with the nature and necessity of prophecy studies, interpretation of biblical prophecy, and defining premillennial doctrine. The second, under the heading "Theological Department," addressed varying topics, from Christology, Roman Catholicism, the meaning of the Reformation, the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the weakness of contemporary Calvinism. Finally, a third section entitled "Reviews and Miscellanies" critiqued various books and sermons recently published, addressed criticism leveled at themselves or prophecy studies in general (usually in Evangelical journals and newspapers) and finally some correspondence. In spite of apparent peripheral interests, premillennialism is the central, and in many ways, only focus of the journal. Indeed, *The Morning Watch*, throughout its breadth, is

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<sup>87</sup> Henry Drummond, *Dialogues on Prophecy* (London: Nisbet, 1828), p. l:iii.

<sup>88</sup> The number of articles and pages will vary depending upon how one chooses to count. Page numbering is rendered difficult by the inclusion of numerous charts and graphs (some of which fold out), facsimiles of Akkadian inscriptions, and page numbering errors in vol. seven. The total pages are approximately 3,986.

-Chapter One-  
The Rising Voice of Prophecy & the Founding of *The Morning Watch*

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a journal about the interpretation and dissemination of biblical prophecy. Whatever other issues may be addressed, they are never removed from under the aegis of the pre-millennial worldview.

The stakes could hardly be greater. On the one hand, the fate of entire nations hung in the balance, their futures intertwined with Britain's own and determined in large measure by the course she would take. On the other hand, lay the destiny of each individual, understood by Albury in terms of prophetic realities. Those of genuine faith, defined primarily as acceptance of the premillennial system and the prophetic character of the Bible, would be rescued from coming cataclysm. Those outside the church—and perhaps those of marginal faith—would be left to endure the coming tribulation. The precise futures of nation and church were unknown, and Albury's speculations and message lay between two conflicting perspectives held in difficult tension:

I question whether we [Britain] shall escape, among whom the poor are ground down with exactions. If they would lighten the burdens of the poor, and deliver them from poverty and beggary; if they would exercise conscientiously the patronage of offices, and advance into the places of church and state men of righteousness and mercy; it would go well with this kingdom: but as to the Papal states of Europe, I believe their day of grace has gone by, and that there abideth them direful judgments, at the hand of God and of the people they have misruled.<sup>89</sup>

Albury saw their days as one of unprecedented crisis, a brief respite between the bowls of God's wrath,<sup>90</sup> during which only the sternest of warnings and national repentance gained through titanic struggle, would save their nation and church from apostasy, judgment, and tribulation.

We dwell upon these things, we reiterate these things, not because we have a diabolical propensity for the horrible, not because we are so selfish as to be unmoved with the sufferings of others provided we ourselves escape; but from tender-heartedness, from

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<sup>89</sup> II:543.8—March 1830 Edward Irving, "Interpretation of All the Old Testament Prophecies Quoted in the New." While the Papal states of Europe had missed "their day of grace," Irving believed Britain still remained within a special period in which the nation's choice was required and ultimately determinative.

<sup>90</sup> *TMW* II:38.9-39.3—March 1830. "The Second Advent of our Lord Jesus." Anonymous.

-Chapter One-  
**The Rising Voice of Prophecy & the Founding of *The Morning Watch***

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love to our brethren, from our certainty that these dangers are impending over us, and from our intense desire to use the precious hours of peace. . .<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> *TMW* 486.9—September 1830. Editor.

# Chapter Two

## A Paradigm of Certitude: Albury's Hermeneutical Foundation

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When faced with such difficult questions as "What is God?" — "The natural reason of man is astounded and bewildered in such contemplations, and a Christian turns with avidity to the Scriptures, and eagerly seizes on the information which they furnish, to arrest his wanderings and quiet his fears."

John Tudor<sup>1</sup>



### 1. Inspiration, Revelation, and the Word of God

The air of expectancy felt by those gathered at Henry Drummond's Albury court was tempered by harsh realities the Circle perceived lay beyond the estate's windows and quiet grounds. Contemplating a tumultuous and rapidly changing world, the Albury Circle turned to the Scriptures and the hope of a new world they saw prophesied across its pages. The birth of modernity had come with a travail that had shaken Britain at every level, touching without prejudice persons of every caste and institution. Wordsworth saw in these changes a sign of hope as an archaic, paternalistic, and hierarchical society was cast aside for a better world. But for those gathered at Albury, the changes engulfing Britain and Europe were a portent of growing darkness dispelled only by the hope of the imminent return of Christ and the (re-) institution of a more godly and spiritual society. They were haunted by the growing specters of secularism, democracy, and capitalism, and vexed by visions of an imminent judgment. Before apparitions of future hope and horror, cultural depravity and God's final victory, the Albury Circle turned to the Bible, seeking in its ancient words a clearer light by which a vicissitudinous age might be understood, endured, and overcome. But even more, Albury found in the Bible, and its spectrum of prophecy, a new ground for certitude by which revealed truths might be further defined and validated to an age that had lost its way.

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<sup>1</sup> II:565.3—September 1830. "On the Names of God."

The Albury Prophecy Conferences were not a venue for the curious but a workshop for the convinced, where a broad range of premillennial details were given doctrinal definition, scriptural confirmation, and, most importantly, interconnected to form a systematic whole. The doctrines and hermeneutic that were brought to the table at Albury and there forged into the basis of the nineteenth century's premillennial worldview, were drawn from a complex *mélange* of varying influences. Some were explicit, recognized, and intentionally expressed. Others affected the matrix in ways more difficult to discern, yet hardly less powerfully. To the former belongs Albury's understanding of the nature of Scripture that effectively bound revelation to inspiration. From this emerged a unified narrative theory through which literal-typological correspondence and doctrinal intent provided Scripture with a polyphonic yet perfectly singular and harmonious message. To the latter belongs the more nebulous influence of such cultural forces as the rationalism of the previous century, a romanticism raised in response to its cold universals and objective laws, an emerging sense of history both rational and romantic, and their own very subjective, and very pessimistic, awareness that theirs was a rapidly changing world. These were combined with Albury's own polemic, apologetic, and pastoral concerns, to fabricate an approach to Scripture that was ancient and modern, rational and romantic, polemical and pastoral.

The premillennial hermeneutic of the Albury Circle found shape and definition over the course of nearly ten years, through three overlapping periods. First, was Irving, who received from Frere the essential shape of the premillennial hope, expanding upon it in a series of sermons on Daniel and Revelation, *Babylon and Infidelity Foredoomed*, and *The Coming of the Messiah in Glory and Majesty*. Second were the years of the Albury Circle, from 1826 to 1830, through which the best and the brightest of premillennial thinkers began the process of fusing together independent strands of premillennial speculation to form a consistent hermeneutic and corresponding doctrinal system. And finally, from 1829-33, through *The Morning Watch*, the Circle provided opportunity for serious systematic reflection, doctrinal integration, and broad dissemination with profound influence. In the end, that which the Circle brought to the table, and that which they created and concluded there, became a sophisticated, all encompassing method of Scriptural interpretation from which their exegesis never seriously deviated

and upon which modern premillennialism was established. At the heart of the Albury conferences was a specific hermeneutic, which was neither completely forced upon the biblical text nor, as the Circle believed, purely derived from it as an intrinsic attribute of the Bible itself. Instead, their hermeneutic is a complex amalgam, faithfully articulating biblical themes while dubiously shaped by *a priori* biases and polemic intent. Its enduring "success" lay in its ability to provide an elegant means of integrating all of history, Scripture, and doctrine under the aegis of a single narrative, while maintaining a simple account of God's intended will and work, largely consistent with tradition. Nothing lay beyond the interpretive umbrella of the premillennial hermeneutic which offered an uncertain age grounds for pistic certitude. A meretricious endeavour, to be sure, yet one that has tempted the church from the dawn of modernity.

#### *a) Inspiration and Revelation*

The concept of revelation is essentially a modern concern, becoming decisive only in the wake of critical questions raised by the Enlightenment. To put it differently, issues that lay at the heart of *The Morning Watch* were of decidedly modern interest, arising when the knowledge of God had become problematic and no longer assumed. The authority of reason had not only supplanted the Bible but had challenged its inspiration and verity. Questions once unknown and unthinkable swirled increasingly through the intellectual currents of the day, decisively affecting the traditional understanding of the Christian faith and its articulation. Revelation itself became a dubious concept as a Newtonian and mechanistic worldview was all but universally assumed, making God a transcendent watchmaker, uninvolved and unneeded in a self-governing, self-sufficient world of self-evident truths.

Even more, the fact that questions of the nature, means, and actuality of revelation had become, for the church, a vital concern suggests that theology no longer derived its life from the reality of revelation. God, for the modern world, was no longer the objective basis of faith from which deductions were made, but had become, instead, the problematic object of human understanding. Inquiry and interpretation of God's nature and acts fell before the epistemic questions of *how* and *how much* any of this could be

known. Tacitly felt or explicitly stated, theologians and biblical scholars were forced to do their work under the pressure of a critical scrutiny which not only challenged the central tenets of the Christian faith but the very concepts of revelation and Scriptural authority upon which they were based. Theology turned from dogmatics deduced from revelation to justifying the validity and place of revelation itself.

That the church generally, and the Albury Circle particularly, had made such issues the central component of their work is indicative of the magnitude of influence the cultural ethos had upon the church. Modernity had brought a perspective that Albury decried and condemned for its incredulity, even as it tacitly determined their own worldview and ultimately gave primary shape to their methodology and theology. As such, their quest was something of a proto-foundationalism in which the faith, having stumbled before the charge of reason, turned to rational methodology in order to demonstrate an extrinsic legitimacy for its existence and verify its message. The doctrine of revelation, as expressed in the premillennial system of *The Morning Watch*, amounts to a thoroughly modern attempt to defend God's divinity and actuality to the world by demonstrating the veracity of the Bible through a rational proto-foundationalist structure. The culture's demand of rational, self-evident truth claims was accepted uncritically by Albury as the Circle took the tools of modernity to defend and explain the ancient faith.

Across Europe, the concepts and implications involved in shaping the church's expanding concern with revelation were only in their infancy. If this was true of the Continent, it was especially so of Britain. Irving and his circle were almost completely ignorant of intellectual discussions in Germany.<sup>2</sup> Lessing's Ditch was unknown, as was

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<sup>2</sup> Albury was not alone: "It is probably true to say that, at the turn of the eighteenth century, hardly anyone in England was aware of the great things that had been happening in the intellectual world of Germany." Stephen Neil and Tom Wright, *Interpretation of the New Testament, 1861-1986* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 1. This changed slowly, with Connop Thirlwall and Julius Hare's translation of Niebuhr's *Roman History* (1828-32)—of which *The Morning Watch* appears to be aware and sharply critical (*TMW* III:211f), Thirlwall's translation of Schleiermacher's *Critical Essay on the Gospel of Luke* (1825), and George Eliot's translation of Strauss's *Life of Jesus* (1846), and it was probably not before 1860 that German thought significantly influenced British theology. While German influence can be said to be negligible upon *The Morning Watch*, its precise influence remains uncertain and worthy of specific research.



*-Chapter Two-*  
**A Paradigm of Certitude: Albury's Hermeneutical Foundation**

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Hegel's dialectic of historical progress.<sup>3</sup> Names were known by the Circle, including Schleiermacher and Johann Eichorn,<sup>(sic)</sup><sup>4</sup> but there seems little, if any, hint that they were aware the details of German thought. Indeed, German scholarship was tarred with one brush and denounced pejoratively through the journal as the work of "Neologians," innovators whose corrosive ideas had begun to vitiate the core of the Christian faith. The Circle was aware, in some vague sense, that German "neological tendencies" had become pervasive, characterizing the "most popular writings of the day."<sup>5</sup> Regardless of specific details, Albury saw the effect of these tendencies to be an erosion of biblical Christianity in so far as it "consists in spiritualizing or giving a mystic sense, at variance with the plain meaning of the language."<sup>6</sup> New ideas of religion, history, and the role of reason had begun to challenge the literal sense or "plain meaning" of the Bible, discrediting its claims and content. It was in response to this that *The Morning Watch* was produced and it was in answer to it that the journal's contributors turned to prophecy. Albury's hermeneutic and consequent premillennial theology represent a "back to the Bible" movement through which the full revelation of Scripture, decayed before the skepticism and spiritualizing of the modern age, found restoration through the doctrine of inspiration. The circle's goal was to restore the Bible to a place of undisputed prominence through the demonstration of its revelatory character inherent through its inspiration.

The roots of Albury's hermeneutic extend to Hellenistic Judaism where biblical writers were understood as completely passive agents, the human consciousness being

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<sup>3</sup> Ultimately, the influence of Hegel must also remain an open question. While on the one hand Hegel's dialectic is nowhere explicitly evident in the journal, three central aims of Hegel's philosophy bear remarkable similarity to Albury's perspective. Hegel's philosophy might be summarized as (1) defining the internal rational structure of the Absolute; (2) rational demonstration of the manner by which the Absolute manifests itself in nature and human history; and (3) expressing, through historicist progress, the end or purpose toward which the Absolute is directed. With a slight change of vocabulary, these might describe the aim and intent of Albury. What remains in question is whether these ideas were drawn specifically from Hegel or whether they were part of the larger intellectual environment of an age that was increasingly coming to grips with the questions of history.

<sup>4</sup> II:392.7—June 1830. "At the head of 'the immense erudition of the theologians' of Germany stands Eickhorn; and below him range Ammon, Schleirmache, and many others." (*sic*)

<sup>5</sup> *TMW* IV:235.2—September 1831.

<sup>6</sup> *TMW* II:413.9—June 1830. Those taking this approach were guilty of making "the plain language of Scripture mystified, and wrested from its original meaning, to suit Neologian skepticism of the day. . ." (VI:357.5—December 1832). Additional mention of "neologians" may be found at II:400.2; 411f; III:211.8; IV:198.5; 235.2.

bypassed through the Holy Spirit's conveyance of the Divine Word.<sup>7</sup> This idea exists in Plato<sup>8</sup> and found Christian interpretation in Justin,<sup>9</sup> Athenagoras,<sup>10</sup> and Theophilus.<sup>11</sup> In the wake of Montanism, and in order to protect the church from the uncertainty of ecstatic revelation, attention shifted from this emphasis, yet without abandoning the strongly "mechanistic" element at its center. Thus, while the early church no longer perceived the consciousness as uninvolved, it continued to ground the source of the Bible completely in God whose act transformed the writer into a passive agent through whom his Word was transmitted verbatim. From a very early date, the Bible was understood to be the result of the Spirit's work, under whom the biblical writers become amanuenses and even musical instruments.<sup>12</sup> The Bible's character, with its content being identified as purely the work and expression of the Spirit free of any significant human influence, was perceived as possessing a divine or miraculous, and therefore intrinsically revelatory, character.

This understanding of inspiration forms the fundamental starting point, not only of Albury's hermeneutic, but their doctrinal developments which are an integral part and necessary consequence of it. Edward Irving and the Albury Circle saw the prin-

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<sup>7</sup> S. M. Jackson, ed., *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, [based upon *Realencyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche*, founded by J. J. Herzog, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, prepared by A. Hauck, 21 vols. (1898-1908)] (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., repr. Of 1907 edition.: Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), pp. VI, 12-17.

<sup>8</sup> See Ion in Plato: *Phaedrus, Ion, Gorgias, and Symposium with passages from the Republic and Laws*, tr. Lane Cooper (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), 534b, pp. 83-84.

<sup>9</sup> "The First Apology," *Justin Martyr and Athenagoras* (II, Ch. XXXVI); "Hortatory Address," *Justin Martyr and Athenagoras* (Ch. VIII).

<sup>10</sup> *Embassy for the Christians* (*Ancient Christian Writers*, No. 23), tr. J. H. Crehan (Westminster, MD.: Newman, 1956), pp. 39ff.

<sup>11</sup> *The Three Books of Theophilus of Antioch to Autolycus*, Book II, 9 (ANCL, III, 74). The concept of inerrancy of Scripture is both ancient and of solid lineage. *Inerrabilis* may be found in Augustine, Aquinas, and Duns Scotus. *Infallibilis* was used by John Wycliffe and Jean de Gerson. Luther and Calvin both described the Bible as being infallible and without error. See Donald Bloesch, *Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration and Interpretation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994), p. 34.

<sup>12</sup> See Weber, *Foundations*, I:230. At TMW II:343.1 J. A. Begg will refer to inspiration as "the dictation of the Holy Spirit."

central role of the Spirit not in the giving of fresh revelation<sup>13</sup> or even the interpretation of Scripture, but in the Bible's creation. "The millenarians assumed that divine inspiration had so controlled the writing of the Bible that the resultant text was free of error or fallibility and that this freedom guaranteed them a divine, not a human, source of truth—and immediate and not mediated revelation."<sup>14</sup> For the Albury Circle, the study of prophecy was the means of unveiling this fact to a skeptical age. Prophetic fulfillment, from the birth of Christ to the French Revolution, confirmed this inherent character of Scripture, allowing Irving to describe the Bible's authority in the strongest of terms: "The unerring pen of inspiration"; "Ordinances defended from alteration by the sanctions of life and death"; "Words fixed to an unchangeable meaning by the unchangeable law of God."<sup>15</sup> The Bible, communicated in such a way that the human authorship, remained functionally irrelevant, was perceived as the literal Word (speech) of God. Plenary inspiration meant verbal revelation as each word, precisely intended by the divine Author, conveyed elements of God's nature, will, and work, while the combined whole infallibly expressed a single unified message that was seen as the center and standard of God's revelation.

Albury's foundationalist quest was to substantiate this center and develop from it a doctrinal system that demonstrated the verity of revelation by showing the interconnection of all things within it. The doctrinal and hermeneutical tasks became entwined, the former determining the nature, centre, and content of God's purpose and work, while the latter traced this consistent line through the Bible's labyrinth of verses and genres into the historical plane where word became reality. The task of the biblical expositor lay in determining the correlation between the words of the Bible where it ex-

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<sup>13</sup> It is important to note that this will change as a consequence of the *a priori* starting point. Albury sought to affirm and demonstrate the Bible's inspiration and thus its revelatory character and authority. This they did by looking to outside or external verifications—historicism, etc.—not only as proof of the validity of prophecy and therefore Scripture, but as revelatory itself as the biblical ideal found specific manifestation. This in turn led the circle to introduce further or additional revelation given by the Spirit following the manifestations at Port Glasgow. But this produced an internal contradiction: their understanding of inspiration largely limited the work of the Holy Spirit to the formation of Scripture and protected the Bible from spontaneous revelation, even while their quest for extrinsic verification expected confirming revelation to occur in temporal manifestations. While these were meant to affirm the Bible's inspiration and message, they in fact led to the opposite.

<sup>14</sup> Sandeen, *Roots*, p. 111.

isted as pregnant potential and history where the inspired word became physically manifest. The correlation between the Word prophesied and the Word manifested in and across history, provided demonstrable evidence of God's providential and sovereign hand and answered the growing questions of modernity even as it affirmed the fact of the ancient faith to a changing world. Albury's method provided a unifying foundation, a paradigm of certitude, from which the revelation conveyed in the words of Scripture might be extrinsically verified.

### *b) Inspiration and Scripture's Literal Sense*

The governing rule of Albury's hermeneutic was to interpret the text strictly according to its literal sense, through which meaning and effect are deduced from the plain intent of the biblical words. There are several reasons for this approach. First, among the Albury Circle, and perhaps beyond, there arose a growing sense that "the factual, empirical, and literal statements were more true than spiritual, allegorical, and figurative."<sup>16</sup> Second, the "success" of certain prophetic exegetes in connecting biblical prophecies to specific historical fulfillment, led to an optimistic approach that came to expect similar consummation of other prophecies. But above all, the literal interpretation was understood as determined by the Bible's inspiration and consequent nature, and was thus the only means by which the biblical narrative might be discerned.

Every word of God, conceived before the world began in his own incomprehensible, eternal, and unchangeable being, from the time of its first utterance in the presence of his intelligent creatures, continually endeavours to assume the form of *fact*. . . . And although it should become, by reason of our imperfection or unbelief, altogether unknown and undiscernible, it would nevertheless continue as influential and important in the sphere of existences, as the sun or the moon or the laws of gravity, or the constitution of man's mind, or any other enactment produced of it. There are *two kinds of fact* in which the declarations of God labour to be realized, the more effectually to present themselves before the mind and apprehension of his children: the first is *Type*; the other is *Fulfillment*.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *TMW* II:288.8—June 1830. "Interpretation of all the Old-Testament Prophecies Quoted in the New" (installment six). Edward Irving.

<sup>16</sup> Sandeen, *Roots*, p. 110. Sandeen notes, correctly in my opinion, that the growing desire to determine the literal sense did not arise "by any new grasp of the intention of the biblical authors."

<sup>17</sup> *TMW* II:491.1—September 1830. C.

In an age that had begun to reflect on the human character and authorship of the Bible, the Albury Circle passionately defended its divine source and nature. *The Morning Watch* understood the power and authority of the Bible to lie in the fact that it was comprised of the "simple," unambiguous speech of God, which expected, indeed demanded, only a literal interpretation. The Bible while not quite co-eternal, nevertheless possessed a pre-existence in the mind of God. This pre-existence extends not to ideas merely, but specifically to "every word" comprising the unified whole. These words are empowered to reveal that which lies in God's "own incomprehensible, eternal, and unchangeable being." This inherent revelatory character is conveyed through "his intelligent creatures," through the inspiration of the biblical writers, an act that John Tudor would elsewhere describe as the "fiat of the Creator, which called them into being, and gave them their powers and places."<sup>18</sup> To the men of the *Watch*, the Bible was nothing more or less than the "simple" articulation of God's mind, will, and intent, which in the very act of its being "spoken," initiated a process wherein the word moved toward certain temporal manifestation. This led the Circle to look to history as the arena of God's activity, seeking there the literal fulfillment the biblical word expected. While it was indeed true that "imperfection and unbelief" might render God's revelation "unknown and undiscernible," the progress and inevitability of its fulfillment was in no way restricted or changed, but moved through time and fulfillment toward an inevitable conclusion. The divine proclamation was bound inextricably to historic event, each revealing the truth of the other, one in concrete temporality, the other as prophetic ideal. Thus, in the many words of Scripture, there are continually given two kinds of facts: that of type, awaiting fulfillment, and that of prophetic word fulfilled, as promise finds consummation.

Clearly a strong neo-Platonism shapes the thought of *The Morning Watch*. Both the biblical words and historical events that manifest from them have their ultimate existence in the mind of God. But this does not mean, at least in the hermeneutical sphere, that Albury's approach should be uncritically equated with the idealism govern-

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<sup>18</sup> *TMW* VI:231.5—December 1832.

-Chapter Two-  
A Paradigm of Certitude: Albury's Hermeneutical Foundation

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ing the interpretive methodologies of Origen, the Alexandrian School, or Augustine.<sup>19</sup> Repeatedly the journal's contributors denounced any and all interpretive methods that might alchemize the plain words of the Bible into some more spiritual meaning segregated from temporal realities.<sup>20</sup> Albury's intention was not to deny a hidden and unifying idea behind the specific event or text nor isolate this idea from any historic referent. Their goal was to advance a specific methodology by which this unifying principle, intrinsic to both the written word and history under the will of God, might be discerned and consistently applied, protecting the church from subjective speculation.<sup>21</sup> Albury's neo-Platonism endeavoured to keep figure and temporal expressions bound within an inextricable correspondence in which each is necessary for the understanding of the other and which together reveal and manifest the mind of God.

The importance placed on history by the Albury Circle marks a slight but important difference from the course proposed by Hans Frei.<sup>22</sup> Frei is certainly correct in noting the tendency in pre-critical hermeneutics toward a reading that was "strongly realistic, i.e., at once literal and historical."<sup>23</sup> He is correct too, in noting three elements of this realistic reading, which characterizes an interpretive perspective even as it marks the "foci of the rebellion against it."<sup>24</sup> First, with the literal-realistic reading it was understood that the biblical narratives expressed actual historical occurrences accurately described. Second, "if the real historical world described by the several biblical stories is a single world of one temporal sequence, there must in principle be one cumulative story

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<sup>19</sup> Manlio Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church: An Historical Introduction to Patristic Exegesis* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994). Mark S. Burrows and Paul Rorem, eds., *Biblical Hermeneutics in Historical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991). R. M. Grant and D. Tracy, eds., *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989).

<sup>20</sup> At *TMW* I:609.3 Irving describes those who spiritualize Isaiah 11:9 ("for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.") by making it describe "the effects of the Gospel upon the wildness of the human heart" as having "fallen far from the mark."

<sup>21</sup> *TMW* III:55.2—March 1831. Edward Irving. "The literal interpretation of [the prophecies] is the basis and foundation of the spiritual; and without the strictest adherence thereto, the spiritual is a speculation of partial men, no true interpretation of God's word by the catholic church."

<sup>22</sup> Hans W. Frei, *Eclipse of the Biblical Narrative: A Study of Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).

<sup>23</sup> Frei, *Eclipse*, p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> Frei, *Eclipse*, p. 1.

to depict it."<sup>25</sup> And third, since there is only one world and one sequential story, it follows that the experience of any individual is to be seen and understood through and as a part of this larger narrative. Each of these three will be affirmed repeatedly through the pages of *The Morning Watch*, with an important distinction. Albury's hermeneutic led the Circle to be not less, but more interested with history. The antecedent presupposition of Albury's hermeneutic was not the accuracy or truth of the Bible *per se*, but in the fact that in the prophetic Word and its historical manifestation, revelation occurred. I agree with Frei, that within nineteenth-century hermeneutics a separation between actual historical facts and idea has occurred, as Albury's emphasis turned from historic event and its meaning, to the superior "story" behind such events which are but shadows of this greater reality. But, it is crucial for our purpose to note that for the men of the *Watch*, this turn was not the loss of historicity but its confirmation, not a denial of historic truth but, on the contrary, the very means by which it might be affirmed, and not the degradation of history, but its elevation as it, with the Word, bore God's revelation. The very nature of the divine Word, precisely because it was divine and because it was part of a grand narrative whole, gave to history a meaning and determinism it would never otherwise possess and made the Circle intensely interested in history and current events, as a means to illustrate and verify the larger story behind them.

Building upon their doctrine of inspiration, the Circle set themselves to interpret Scripture from a purely literal perspective. "We endeavour now to shew the necessity of taking all the word of God in its simple and literal meaning."<sup>26</sup> The simple reason for this lay in the fact that reality paralleled the words as literally stated, for "the true meaning of the Holy Spirit was intended to run parallel to the literal expressions, with respect to the Bible; just as the true meaning of the Holy Spirit was intended to run parallel to the external ordinances and ministerial testimony with respect to the church and clergy."<sup>27</sup> In the journal's last year, an anonymous writer would summarize ideas that had governed their perspective from the beginning. God had made human beings capable of

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<sup>25</sup> Frei, *Eclipse*, p. 2.

<sup>26</sup> *TMW* VI: 231.1—December 1832. "The Language of Heaven." John Tudor.

<sup>27</sup> *TMW* II:361.9—June 1830. "On the Relation which the Bible Bears to the Other institutions of the Christian Religion." K.

receiving his revelation, giving this revelation a written form easily grasped by human understanding and a prophetic character that expected literal historic fulfillment. The key to understanding both was to allow the words to mean no more or less than what they literally said: "the Scriptures themselves are very simple, easily understood by all simple-minded men; the prophecies as easily as the other portions, when they are taken literally."<sup>28</sup> The article decries those who deny a literal fulfillment as giving no Gospel and no comfort.

Albury's method endeavoured to interpret the text within the bounds of the literal language and the nuances and illustrations which existed at the time of its writing. Thus, literal, had for *The Morning Watch*, a very simple meaning: "When I say *literal*, I do not mean to the exclusion of the figures and metaphors with which it hath abounded; I mean *honest*, according to the natural sense of such language, plain or figurative, as the prophet useth."<sup>29</sup> Figure and type were therefore carefully tied to precise temporal realities found in language, history, and current events. Additionally, Albury sought to define biblical language in consistent, unambiguous terms, suggesting in the journal's first year that a prophetic lexicon was needed in which various biblical words might be given unchanging definition throughout the prophetic collage.

This idea expands to govern the whole of the Bible. Interpretation of the parables for example is guided by an unchanging correspondence between a word and the single referent intended through specific imagery. If "seed" meant "men" in a preceding parable it should have the same meaning in the next. Thus field is always to refer to the world, birds of the air to the devil, and mustard seed, through interesting interpretive path, refers only to Jesus Christ as the object of faith. In other words, each word is viewed as having a rather fixed meaning which is then compared to other words/meanings of a given passage or parable to gain a uniform and consistent interpre-

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<sup>28</sup> *TMW* VII: 90.7—March 1833. "Christ in us the Hope of Glory" pp. VII:87-107. Anonymous.

<sup>29</sup> *TMW* I:609.2—December 1829. "Old Testament Prophecies Quoted in the New—No. IV." Edward Irving. Borthwick agrees: "To understand words, then, in the their plain and obvious sense, and figures and allusions as they were universally applied in the time, country, and tongue of the writer, I hold to be the common key to all language, sacred and profane, and therefore to that of the prophecies, fulfilled or unfulfilled, of the Old and New Testaments" (I:624.9f).



-Chapter Two-  
A Paradigm of Certitude: Albury's Hermeneutical Foundation

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tation.<sup>30</sup> A strictly literal sense required a very consistent use of biblical language and the Circle sought to maintain this exactitude as interpretations moved through various genres and interpretive levels.

To the very end of the journal, these essential principles would be maintained without wavering, as the journal's various contributors sought to provide a constant starting point for all interpretive and theological work. The interpretive goal lay in creating a method by which the literal and intended meaning given to a word in the mind of God might be made known without prejudice or pollution. To limit the church's purity and power to some vague and future hope or mere spiritual reality alone was to make the same error as those who spiritualized the messianic promises made to the Jews thus denying—and ultimately missing—their literal fulfillment.<sup>31</sup> Instead, the great promises of Israel's restoration, the New Jerusalem, and the reign of Christ on earth were expected to find fulfillment exactly as promised, literally and verbatim. These principles not only formed the starting point from which Albury did all its work, they were maintained as the foundational element in the premillennial system as it spread across both miles and decades. An American observer, almost twenty years after Irving's death saw in American premillennialism the very essence of the Albury system:

"Millenarianism has grown out of a new 'school of Scripture interpretation;' and its laws of interpretation are so different from the old, that the Bible may almost be said to wear a new visage and speak with a new tongue—a tongue not very intelligible, in many of its utterances, to the uninitiated. The central law of interpretation by which millenarians profess always to be guided, is that of giving the literal sense."<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> III:315-24—June 1831. "On the Lord's Parables." G. A. S. This article is an excellent illustration of this principle. The author holds that parables are not given as similitudes intended to illustrate or clarify a point known independently (p. 315) but "to hide the truth" (p. 316) so that the wicked would not understand. Parables express "an independent means of determining the order and relation of the facts which they severally do set forth" (p. 317). In order for these facts to point to a single, unified meaning, the imagery used between the must in each case point to a same or consistent referent. Thus "seed" may refer in one parable to "men" (p. 319) and "mustard seed" to Christ (as the one who made himself least of all men, p. 320) but it may never refer to the Kingdom of God or the Gospel without violating its the law of consistent meaning. The same principles are used in interpreting the typological: Fine linen of Egypt is identified as a type of science, Assyrian = Antichrist, Jerusalem = the Jerusalem above, Bethlehmites warring against the Assyrians = Christ with his saints, warring against "the armies of the beast," etc.

<sup>31</sup> *TMW* V:312.2—June 1832. "An Interpretation of the Fourteenth Chapter of the Apocalypse." Edward Irving.

<sup>32</sup> Sandeen, *Roots*, p. 107.6 Quoting from *Princeton Review* 25 (1853): 68.

Indeed, to the present day, contemporary premillennialism describes its existence as “a *result* of consistent application of the basic hermeneutical principle of literal, normal, or plain interpretation. No other system of theology can claim this.”<sup>33</sup>

### *c) Inspiration and the Literal-Typological Hermeneutic*

But “literal” tells only half the story. Albury’s strict literalism found its natural extension in the more comprehensive literal-typological methodology. Distinct from classical allegory and its spiritualized interpretation unfettered by any necessary temporal reality, typology was understood as a logical and integral component of the literal reading and the means of conjoining it to the historical with unique precision. In *The Morning Watch*, a truly literal reading required that a yet greater consummation in history be expected. As Irving expressed:

The truth is, that faithful interpretation forceth us to find greater personages, and more important events, than those of ancient Jewish history, in these prophetic chronicles. We must either make the word of God a book of extravagances in language, that is, a book of falsehoods; or, if we keep it a book of words, every one like silver seven times purified, we must come to the conclusion that something more is couched under these prophecies than meet the ear.<sup>34</sup>

The doctrine of inspiration, having given each specific word a purified character, thus rendering it capable of precisely communicating God’s single intent, was to be assigned neither a greater nor less a referent than its simple literal meaning required. This referent was to be found always in time, either past and thus as a fact fulfilled, or future as a fact prophetically promised. This prophetic extension allowed the words to be literally understood while preventing the Bible from becoming “a book of extravagances in language... a book of falsehoods,” in which neither promise or fulfillment would have any correlation beyond that determined by subjective definition. Scripture would otherwise be characterized by hyperbole and its historical referent, fulfillment, or meaning impossible to determine. The literal, where yet unfulfilled in history, looks forward to a

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<sup>33</sup> Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, p. 85. Italics mine.

<sup>34</sup> *TWW* IV:53.9—September 1831. “Interpretation of the Old-Testament Prophecies Quoted in the New, Interpretation xi.” Edward Irving.

precise and corresponding consummation. Thus, as we have seen, there exists for Albury two kinds of facts, those of prophetic type and those of prophecy fulfilled.

Through this dual nature, the unity of message and intent behind the scriptural words unfolds. Irving held that divine providence "did so order the events approximate and the events ultimate as that one set of words should be applicable to both, and capable of describing and foretelling both—applicable, not by any straining of their import but by a true faithful interpretation of them."<sup>35</sup> Each prophecy must speak first of that which is "truly and literally accomplished" and must look forward to "a thing yet more remote, of an event yet more grand."<sup>36</sup> Thus the words of Scripture look not to a single promise and singular fulfillment, but always to a chain or series of consummating steps, each incarnating and fulfilling the word while typologically prefiguring its next incarnation until it attains the teleological goal toward which God is moving it and all of history.

Every word of God gives origin to an eternal progression. . . . In like manner, every prophecy, taking its rise from the actual circumstances of the people to whom it is addressed, and primarily given for their direction under impending calamities, has yet a further largeness, which these circumstances do not come up to; has an extend which passes beyond those times, and reveals a purpose of God which will stand for ever.<sup>37</sup>

Consequently, historical events—facts fulfilled—were viewed by Albury as themselves possessing a dual character, functioning as both fulfillment of biblical prophecy and type of some yet greater manifestation of it. Across history, God's word of promise repeatedly manifests but only partially fulfills the ultimate intent of the word as literally understood. But the inspiration of Scripture, and God's deity in and over history, are together affirmed as word and historical reality interfuse to describe in word and temporal manifestation a yet future reality. Or as Irving described: "It is almost a constant rule of prophecy that the far-off judgment or deliverance was seen through one

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<sup>35</sup> *TMW* I:579.2—December 1829. Edward Irving. See also V:117.5 where the anonymous author asks, "What ground is there for expecting, whilst one class has actually received a literal fulfilment, that the other shall not, when both are expressed in precisely the same kind of language, and sometimes occur even in the same sentence? (as Isa. lii. 13-15.) What proof, or substantial reason, can possibly be brought forward that there will be any difference in the manner and mode of their fulfilment?" Cf. also p. V:119 where this argument continues.

<sup>36</sup> *TMW* I:579—December 1829. Edward Irving.

<sup>37</sup> *TMW* II:724.6—December 1830. "The Perils of the Church, and the Judgment of the Nations." Anonymous.

near at hand, which resembled it, and was in truth typical of it.”<sup>38</sup> Prophecy and history then become inextricably bound and only together can revelation be said to have occurred. Irving held that “something more” lay “couched under these prophecies,” another reality, accurately but only vaguely conveyed in the first instance but historically inevitable by the nature of God’s word which “continually endeavours to assume the form of *fact*.” The pseudonymous author “Fidus” affirmed the necessary elements of literal and historic fulfillment, stating, “it was never heard of, that, where one event is stated which confessedly informs us concerning another event as well as itself, and where the event so stated is a *real* and not merely an *ideal or possible* event, the event represented by it is not to be regarded as real also, whether present, past, or future.”<sup>39</sup> Such perspectives reflect a central axiom of Albury’s interpretive methodology: the power of God’s spoken—and thus written—word endeavours to find fulfillment that is literal and historic and the conjoining of Word to temporal referent reveals the intention and work of God.

This principle led Albury to conclude that the whole of Scripture, through every part and genre, was fundamentally prophetic. The nature of inspiration, combined to a divinely deterministic understanding of history, led the circle to see every historical event as a fulfillment of the prophetic Word and prophetic type of a yet: “the very historical books are prophetic, because most of the principle events therein recorded are declared in the New Testament to be patterns of things to come.”<sup>40</sup> The Scriptures become a vast complex of intertwining, interrelated narratives, each speaking faithfully from within its own historical context even as it prefigured future events and combined with them to form a single grand narrative in which the purpose and teleological goal of God, is prophetically promised, figurally defined and ultimately fulfilled. This perspective allowed events outside the Bible’s time and content to be linked to biblical promise and type and fitted within the larger scheme. The net effect was to produce a completely different approach to Scripture and its message. The interpretation of prophecy, through the dis-

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<sup>38</sup> *TMW* II:532.3—September 1830. “Interpretation of All the Old Testament Prophecies in the New, VII.” Edward Irving.

<sup>39</sup> II:258.9f—June 1830. Fidus.

<sup>40</sup> *TMW* II:411.5—June 1830. Anonymous.

cerning of correlations between type and antitype, within and without the Bible, become the primary (singular?) task of the interpreter. The divinity of Scripture is upheld through modern historicism; the veracity of revelation is demonstrated through the rational, universal, and mechanistic system of the divine word manifesting in time.

#### *d) Inspiration and a Unified Narrative Theory*

The inspiration of the Bible gave it three necessary qualities: it was literal, prophetic, and unified in message and intent. Against those questions that challenged the Bible's historic context, authorship, and reliability, the Albury Circle sought to go behind such contingent dimensions to grasp the internal unity and eternal intent behind the words. Only here could one discern the Bible's true message and evidence of its veracity and Divine origin.

The revealed will of God forms a complete system of Divine truth. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, comprising the whole of this revelation, are not to be regarded merely as so many detached and independent books, but must be received as all combining to the formation of one grand consistent whole. Throughout, they manifest a *unity of design*, to which all parts are sub-ordinated. Not only is each of these parts valuable in itself; they all like wise mutually reflect light on each other, thus contributing to the full development of the purposes of the Most High. Throughout, they manifest a unity of design, to which all parts are sub-ordinated. As each of the numerous objects which adorn a landscape may have attractions in itself, while the peculiar features and general loveliness of the scene are the combined effect of the whole; so, in order to obtain full and accurate conceptions of the will of God, it is necessary not merely to view individually the various revelations He has given, but to study them also in their combined and relative character. Our ignorance, therefore, of any one of these revelations, or of the place which it occupies in relation to others, must to a proportionate extent mar our perception of the general design of all, and destroy, to our apprehension, the beautiful harmony which pervades them. Not only so, but as all Revelation has been vouchsafed on the *principle* of its *unity*, it abounds with such allusions as render necessary a full knowledge of all its parts to the perfect understanding of any one of them.<sup>41</sup>

This paragraph discloses a number of elements central to the Albury Circle's perspective of Scripture. First, consistent with their doctrine of inspiration, revelation is equated with the "Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments," which together contain "the whole of this revelation." This does not deny revelation through typological mani-

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<sup>41</sup> II: 329.2—March 1830. "On the Heresy of Hymeneus and Philetus Concerning the First Resurrection" (II Tim. 2:16-19). J. A. Begg.

festations in history. Rather, it limits these manifestations, or interpretations of them, to expressions of biblical truths that affirm the Bible's unity of design and teleological goal. Second, the Bible is not to be understood "as so many detached and independent books," but "one grand consistent whole" which gives through its unity of message and purpose "a complete system of Divine truth." The study of Scripture's internal interconnections and their correspondence to historical antitypes is crucial to properly understanding the Bible. Third, the "unity of design" and the resultant "system" suggest that revelation, as given in Scripture, possesses an organic unity from which its salient facts are to be deductively reasoned and systematically aligned. Fourth, "ignorance of any one of these revelations," i.e. the constituent details of the grand whole or their interrelationship, will "mar" and "destroy" one's perception of the unity of the Bible. Finally, returning full circle, the infallibility of the divine revelation is "vouchsafed" by this unity of design and message.

The uniting or central narrative of the Bible was deduced from five different temporal processions that express the Divine will:

The principles to which we allude are derived, First, from God's dealings with his people, all of which were typical of his dealings with the church; and those visible interpositions on behalf of the Jews, which are exponents of his invisible interposition on behalf of his church: Secondly, from the deliverers raised up at different times to typify the great Deliverer, who shall come at the end of time to deliver his church from Antichrist: Thirdly, from the seasons of the year, and the Jewish feasts connected with the seasons, which typify the order and time of the several states of the church, and of God's interposition for her deliverance: fourthly, from the numbers contained in various parts of Scripture, by combining which the dates of these several times may be ascertained: fifthly, from the several parts of the tabernacle, of the temple, and of the primitive churches, which by their arrangements, and by the places occupied by the different orders of worshippers, indicate the arrangement of the whole creation at the restitution of all things.<sup>42</sup>

Each of these temporal processions reflects, in a way unique to itself, a particular element of the whole; imperfect in isolation yet an integral part of a composite formed

with the other four. Central to each was the concept of type, through which God's revelation was manifested in different forms across time to give a variegated voice to the Bible's single message. The nation of Israel, its deliverers and kings, the biblical seasons<sup>43</sup> and feasts, even the design of the tabernacle and temple, were prophetic and figural expressions of God's will. Having existed in the mind of God, their temporal manifestations were made ineluctable with God's giving "voice" to thought and thereby producing Scripture. In tracing the progress of any one of these five temporal processions, and through their combined witness especially, the biblical interpreter was able to identify God's ultimate intendment and the course and progress by which it was being fulfilled.

It is the use and wont of the prophetic style to intermingle the figurative and the literal: for this reason, that truth is one; and the creation, in all its parts, an expression of that one truth. The similtudes are therefore not accidental resemblances, but real though diversified, expressions of the same truth. The figures of the Scriptures taken from nature are the Holy Spirit's expositions of what nature was fashioned and is preserved to body forth, concerning the one purpose of God.<sup>44</sup>

The "one purpose of God" was defined as the "restitution of all things," which *The Morning Watch* identified from its first year as the millennial kingdom.<sup>45</sup> The Bible's inspiration, veracity, and unity were objectively demonstrated, as the millennial goal and history's progression toward it were shown to be the single object of vastly different typologies, genres and texts.

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<sup>42</sup> *TMW* V:358.4—June 1832. "The Present State of Prophetic Knowledge." Anonymous. The first two on this list are noted by the author as being common to the whole history of the church. The third however, is "altogether modern. . . . The first work we know of it . . . bears the date 1787" and entitled the *Revelation of St. John*. Mr. Cuninghame of Lainshaw is said to have made profitable use of this model as did "a very exact and able investigator" who is identified as the anonymous author of "Times and Seasons" (*TMW* I:36ff). Later (V:362.2) in the same article the author lists four separate forms of prophecy: 1) Simple announcement; 2) Allegory and parable; 3) Symbols; 4) Types and typical histories. These forms of prophecy, except in the Apocalypse, are kept distinct; a chapter is wholly symbolical (Dan. 7) or wholly announcement (Dan. 11).

<sup>43</sup> Cf. *TMW* I:38.8—March 1829: "Hence I infer. . . those numerous expressions which refer to the seasons—namely, former rain, and seed time, latter rain and first fruits, harvest and vintage—are not simply poetical figures, but that they are marks by which we may chronologically arrange the discursive prophecies; and it would be as unseemly to violate the proper order, as to expect 'snow in summer' and 'rain in harvest.'"

<sup>44</sup> *TMW* I:614.3—December 1829. "Old Testament Prophecies Quoted in the New—No. IV." Edward Irving. It is worth noting that here nature forms the basic imagery, an element that is not listed in the five areas listed above. Having allowed the procession of types to occur in various forms the Circle began to discover parallels beyond Scripture.

<sup>45</sup> *TMW* I:184.3—June 1829. "Ruling on Earth No Degradation for our Lord." Anonymous.

Those gathered at Henry Drummond's Albury manor had begun their study under the inviolable axiom that the end of all things was near. Here amid the quiet grounds and debate, the men of the *Watch* believed they had discovered in the Scriptures a singular message that confirmed their perspective. A multitude of texts and genres, spread across time, combined to reveal, in word and historic manifestation, the objective of God's creation and the key to its unfolding across time. The demonstration of both this goal and the unified narrative by which it was known, became essential if the Scriptures were to be kept from disintegrating into an incongruent and irreconcilable collection of texts, thereby hiding God's revelation and the Bible's miraculous character. Ignorance of any one of the above processions, denial of God's intended end and the imminence of the millennial kingdom, or ignorance of the steps by which it progressed and was gained, would lead one to misunderstand the whole of Scripture. Proper interpretation was determined not by authorial intent, a particular *sitz im Leben* or cultural *Zeitgeist*, or even grammatical structure per se, but by its part in expressing what the Circle believed was the singular message of Scripture: the end of all things had come. The Albury Circle found in the Scriptures little more than they had brought to them. But for the men gathered at Albury, their study of the Bible, discussions, and systematic structuring came as fresh revelation providing an objective means by which the Christian faith and message might be undeniably confirmed.

#### e) *Inspiration, Prophecy, and the Hermeneutical Task*

A complex hermeneutic became necessary to fulfill the *a priori* assumptions of the Bible's inherently prophetic character and message. The Bible's unified narrative, centered on an imminent millennial kingdom, required that every interpretation reflect this center, though expressed through a myriad of texts and perspectives and through the intertwining of promise and fulfillment. The prophetic character of the biblical corpus and reality of partial though literal manifestations occurring through history, required the interpreter to correlate promise with fulfillment and partial-typical fulfillments with



teleological intent and then synchronize<sup>46</sup> them within a single linear progression. Additionally, the literal quality of God's word required the interpreter take no extravagances that denied the simple and plain meaning of the text. To put it another way, the proper interpretation of every verse required it testify to the millennial kingdom or some attribute of it, showing both its prophetic promise and typical manifestations, united across time, without spiritualizing, allegorizing, or redefining the word in any way beyond that which its simple, plain, meaning required. A difficult task to be sure, but one approached by the Circle with hope and confidence.

Albury's interpretive labour followed these principles through the whole of the journal, finding repeated restatement, illustration and example.

Because these symbols are in the New Testament taken from the earthly and applied to the heavenly also, from the temporal and applied to the spiritual; we of the Gentiles, upon whom the glory hath arisen, may well see, and ought ever to see the universal purpose of God by Christ and his people and the heavenly city set forth therein. It is not because they apply Israel to the church and Jerusalem to heaven, and Canaan to the celestial reward, that we object, but because, in this true spiritual application of them, they are so schismatical as to cut off the literal application also to the things they name.<sup>47</sup>

In any and all texts, the Christian interpreter "ought ever to see the universal purpose of God by Christ and his people and the heavenly city set forth therein." This purpose, taking first an "earthly form" in Israel, prefigured a deeper spiritual reality that would manifest next in the church and then in the millennial kingdom. Each is to be literally understood: Israel, Jerusalem, and Canaan refer first and always to literal temporal realities. At the same time, each of these realities exhibits only a partial fulfillment of what was to occur under this imagery. The historic manifestations of each, lest the biblical words describing them reflect mere extravagance of language, insufficiently exhibit what is to be literally expected from the promise. Such biblical words as "Israel," "Jerusalem," and "Canaan" reflect, simultaneously, a historic reality, a temporal prefiguring of a latter and fuller manifestation, and a Divinely intended culmination. To those around

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<sup>46</sup> The very term "synchronize" appears to have been coined in the mint of prophetic reflection. The Oxford English Dictionary lists the work of Cambridge prophecy expert Joseph Mede (1586-1638) as the earliest incidence of the word.

<sup>47</sup> III:54.8—March 1831. Edward Irving. Irving goes on to state that if there is no earthly type we will never know what the Jerusalem above, that cometh out of the heavens. . . doth mean."

the table at Albury, the interpretive task was simple and possible as long as one saw this pattern and consistently applied it to the text.

Thus, underlying the complexity of the premillennial hermeneutic devised at Albury, is an irreducible methodology that the Circle believed was intrinsic to the text itself. Albury's methodology required the interpreter first distinguish between type and antitype, or more precisely, between promise, foreshadowing, and ultimate goal. This first step was crucial: "There are two opposite mistakes into which we are apt to fall in studying the word of God: we sometimes miss the true meaning by falsely appropriating to ourselves promises meant for other people, and at other times by falsely rejecting warnings meant for ourselves."<sup>48</sup> Second, the literal, typological, and ultimate are then each placed in their proper order within the grand scheme and message of the Bible. This order-chronology was again an intrinsic part of the Bible and thus discernable through specific methodology derived from it. This led the circle to conclude, "the simplest mode of correcting both errors is their juxtaposition. The restoration of Israel is coupled almost always with judgments on these their oppressors; therefore the restoration and the judgments coincide in time."<sup>49</sup> The Bible's chronologies, historic types, and inherent juxtapositions provide the pattern by which the interpreter may place each typical prefiguring in its proper order.

This interpretive methodology was consistently and creatively applied to the whole of Scripture. Edward Irving, using the literal-typical hermeneutic, interprets the Assyrian invasion of Samaria in terms that are strictly historical, wholly prophetic, and sufficiently malleable to describe the events of their own day. Looking at Isaiah 8:6, Irving viewed the Assyrians not only as an actual historic people and their invasion a factual incident in Jewish history, but as a type of every oppressor who would succeed them

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<sup>48</sup> *TMW* V:4.1—March 1832. "Christ the Morning Star; And Lucifer son of the Morning." The consequence of each of these errors is spelled out in what follows. This concept had become routine in *The Morning Watch* by 1832 and was seen as a fundamental rule to proper interpretation: "We reiterate our warnings. . . from a conviction that misapplying to one class, promises or threatenings which belong to another, is a most fruitful source of error; and from the full persuasion that rightly applying them is the only way of giving harmony and exactness to the interpretation of unfulfilled prophecy" (*TMW* V:3.6).

<sup>49</sup> *TMW* V:4.9.

“in the appointed work of bowing the stiff neck of God’s rebellious people.”<sup>50</sup> The Assyrian invasions, predicted by the prophets and then manifesting in time, became themselves a type of yet greater persecutions that would befall Israel and later the church. Thus, a “complete foreshadowing of the future fate of Israel was given in the succession of Tiglath-pileser, Shalmanezar, and Sennacherib (included in the one name ‘the Assyrian’).”<sup>51</sup> This “foreshadowing” is required by the literal language of the biblical text: the Assyrian King’s boast of dominion over the whole earth, must function as a type of a yet future reality, as Sennacherib never ruled the *whole* earth. Sennacherib’s assault on Israel is understood as both a historical fact and prefigured reality that described a later assailant who would come again to subdue God’s people, conquering “the whole earth.”<sup>52</sup> Because the dire judgments, understood literally, had not occurred, they were made to speak prophetically, and because the modern days no longer have Babylonians or Assyrians, such referents must be understood as having an antitypical correspondence in their own time.

The Circle, having concluded that nothing occurred in time that was not first prefigured in Scripture, passionately endeavoured to identify biblical types with their historic referent, especially those of their own time. Egypt, they concluded, was a type of France.<sup>53</sup> “The burden of Tyre. . . refers we think to England.”<sup>54</sup> Specific referents were likewise expected for Babylon, Idumea, Assyria, and Moab, and the Circle sought to find their antitypical fulfillment in “some modern power, temporal or ecclesiastical, or both united.”<sup>55</sup> Contemporary Europe was prefigured in “the ten tribes under Jereboam” which “represent the ten Gothic and Christian nations of Europe, which form the ten

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<sup>50</sup> *TMW* I:153.4—June 1829. Edward Irving. Pages 153-155 are helpful for understanding Irving’s approach to Scripture.

<sup>51</sup> *TMW* I:332.6—September 1829. Irving. cf. *TMW* I:153 where the literal-typological interpretation portrays the Assyrians as be both a literal and historic people and the type of all who would succeed them in persecuting God’s people. Another author shows how Israel figurally displays the dispensations of history (*TMW* IV:130.8ff).

<sup>52</sup> *TMW* I:339.1.

<sup>53</sup> *TMW* II:739f.

<sup>54</sup> *TMW* II:743.3. Their hunch was later confirmed: “The idolatry of commerce is chiefly found in England, the antitype of Tyre” (*TMW* V:9.5).

<sup>55</sup> *TMW* II:280.1. They were “successful,” as will be shown later.

toes of Nebuchadnezzars' image" and Jereboam's apostasy which united these tribes was equated "to the idolatries, ecclesiastical abuses, and blasphemies" of the Papacy.<sup>56</sup> The French Revolution, first seen by Albury as a prophetic fulfillment, became increasingly understood as, simultaneously, a type of that yet "greater earthquake" of the last days.<sup>57</sup> The waters of Shiloah (Isa. 8:6) were representative of every blessing God gave his people and more specifically, the gift of the Holy Spirit,<sup>58</sup> and the Holy Ghost was seen prefigured in the "dew of manna" (Num. 11:9). Israel's rejection and misuse of these physical realities were seen as prophetic foreshadowing of their own day's rejection of the Holy Spirit and the reason God must send again the last days "Assyrian." Edom was seen as a type of Rome and the Papacy<sup>59</sup> and, more generally, the apostate Church.<sup>60</sup> Elijah, on the other hand, represented all those "who look for salvation according to the Scriptures"<sup>61</sup> and prefigurement of their deliverance, the pretribulation rapture.<sup>62</sup> The sacraments, as biblically given, and their use through the church age, were seen as types of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit that was to occur in the last days.<sup>63</sup> The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is a type of the coming day of the Lord.<sup>64</sup> The year of Jubilee represented the physical restoration of Israel to their homeland<sup>65</sup> and the Feast of Tabernacles a figure of that celebration which "is to be observed in the future glorious state"<sup>66</sup> of the millennial kingdom.

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<sup>56</sup> *TMW* III:272.9.

<sup>57</sup> *TMW* IV:322.4. See also V:241.5, VII:149.3.

<sup>58</sup> *TMW* I:153f.

<sup>59</sup> *TMW* III:23.2.

<sup>60</sup> *TMW* II:90.2.

<sup>61</sup> *TMW* III:277.5

<sup>62</sup> *TMW* IV:280f. The rapture is seen to be prefigured in other ways, including Lot's escape from Sodom and the deliverance of the Israelites from the fiery furnace.

<sup>63</sup> *TMW* V:319.5.

<sup>64</sup> *TMW* II:17.9.

<sup>65</sup> *TMW* VI:352.8f.

<sup>66</sup> *TMW* :I:42.7.

Those outside the Circle saw Albury's hermeneutic as a Pandora's box, opened only to release a multitude of subjective interpretations. Ironically, it was for the very opposite reason the Albury Circle extolled the value of prophecy studies:

The double sense of prophecy, however, is of all things the most remote from fraud or equivocation, and has its ground of reason perfectly clear. For what is it? Not the convenient latitude of two unconnected senses, wide of each other, and giving room for fallacious ambiguity; but the combination of two related, analogous, and harmonizing, though disparate, subjects, each clear and definite in itself; implying a twofold truth in the prescience, and creating an aggravated difficulty, and thereby an accumulated proof in the completion. So that the double sense of prophecy, in its true idea is a check upon the pretences of vague and unappropriated prediction, rather than a door to admit them.<sup>67</sup>

For Albury, this methodology provided a paradigm of certitude. The literal sense, the strict grounding of type and antitype to historical realities, and the unity of prophetic intent centered on an imminent return of Christ, were all employed to protect the Bible from its critical detractors and those who spiritualized its words into impotency and temporal irrelevance. Well aware of the prevalence and dangers of subjectivism, the Albury Circle endeavoured to demonstrate that their method actually protected the church from notional and chimeric interpretation.

## 2. The Quest for Certitude: Theology's Pandora's Box

The Reformers had derived the concept of *sola scriptura*, not from the principle of theopneusty or an inherent formal authority, but from the Bible's doctrinal content.<sup>68</sup> Scripture's authority was a derived authority, dependent not upon its own character given in its formation, but the objective reality to which it gives witness. This in turn

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<sup>67</sup> *TMW* II:43.5—March 1830. Anonymous. The author is here quoting favourably a Mr. Davison. The larger context surrounding this statement speaks to the use of prophecy and seeing one verse or passage as having two meanings and was used to defend against the charge that his interpretation was "mere arbitrary ingenuity."

gave the Bible a unity of content. While the details of this content differed in detail between Luther and Calvin, it had, in both, a decidedly Christological center.<sup>69</sup> To go further, their Christological emphases placed the authority of the Bible outside itself and separate from it. Thus, the Reformers created a doctrinal focal point that led to a specific hermeneutic, but one that sought always to bear witness not to its own character or evidence, but to Christ as the center of Scripture.

While both the Reformers and the Albury Circle attempted to approach Scripture from a doctrinal center, there were profound differences between them. First, while the reformers took a Christological starting point, Albury, more in keeping with Protestant orthodoxy than the Reformation, began from a particular understanding of inspiration. Albury emphasized the divine nature and source of Scripture while the Reformers emphasized its human character through which the Spirit inspires and interprets throughout the history of the church. Second, where they both sought a doctrinal focus by which the meaning of Scripture was to be interpreted, Albury's was centered not on Christology, but the doctrines of an imminent advent and the millennial kingdom. The men of the *Watch* interpreted the Scriptures entirely from the premise that the premillennial return of Christ was upon them and the fact, nature, and details of this event were the focus of Scripture. Editor John Tudor explained that it was through the Apocalypse that "we derive the full and certain knowledge of the reign of Christ upon earth, and learn to understand the long and varied series of events by which this glorious kingdom is prepared and announced." But this is more than mere announcement of contents, for the reign of Christ on earth constitutes the "consummation of the purpose of

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<sup>69</sup> R. A. Muller and J. L. Thompson, eds., *Biblical Interpretation in the Era of the Reformation: Essays Presented to David C. Steinmetz* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996). David C. Steinmetz, ed., *The Bible in the Sixteenth Century* (Second International Colloquy on the History of Biblical Exegesis in the Sixteenth Century; Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990). H. Bomkamm, *Luther and the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969). K. Hagen, *Luther's Approach to Scripture as Seen in His "Commentaries" on Galatians* (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1993). W. J. Kooiman, *Luther and the Bible* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1961). J. Pelikan, *Luther the Expositor* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1959). Q. Breen, *John Calvin: A Study in French Humanism* (Hamden, CT: Archon, 1968 [1931]). W. J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth-Century Portrait* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). T. F. Torrance, *The Hermeneutics of John Calvin* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1988).

<sup>70</sup> Weber, *Foundations*, pp. 323ff.

God. . . no where laid down explicitly. . . except in the Apocalypse.”<sup>70</sup> For Albury, three issues were seen as fundamental: the inspiration of the Bible, its unified message of the Second Advent, and the Apocalypse as the interpretive center of the Bible. Upon these hermeneutical principles, Albury built their premillennial system.

The contributors of *The Morning Watch* were not the first to shape their biblical interpretation by a doctrinal center. Nor were they the first to find in this doctrinal center a key to seeing the unified message of the Bible. In fact, both may be seen as biblical. The “surprise” that the Messiah came not as expected, conquering king, but as suffering servant, led to passages not previously understood as messianic, to be reinterpreted and applied around this new center. One thinks here of Ps. 117:22f and Acts 8:26ff with its reinterpretation of Isa. 53:7-8. And in Acts 7:2ff Stephen presents the entire history of Israel within a Christological framework. The questions that rise then are not whether such reinterpretation is wrong, but in what way, or by what criteria may it be said to be correct and properly done? And does a spiritual (non-literal) interpretation automatically violate the meaning of the text? Certainly Paul allowed this (cf. II Cor. 3:12-18 and Ex. 34:30-35 LXX!). But this raises other questions: in what way is typology a legitimate means of discerning the Spiritual realities of the text or the unity of the Bible? And if Scripture is to be interpreted through the lens of a doctrinal center, which doctrine is to play this role and by what criteria is such a judgment made?

The error of the Albury Circle was not specifically in either their desire to shape a hermeneutic from a doctrinal center or to see in the Bible a unity of message or intent. Their problematic course was determined rather by the center they chose and the unity they discerned. Abandoning the Christological basis of the Reformers, Albury found its replacement in the imminent and premillennial Second Advent. This error was compounded in their attempt to find in this hermeneutic proof of the Bible's inspiration and the veracity of its message. But the proposition of “theopneusty” is not objectively provable. Attempts to determine external proofs or evidences of the doctrine—through Scripture's antiquity, integrity of the textual tradition, or, in the case of millennialism, prophetic fulfillment—reflect a modern rationale that expects external proof or support

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<sup>70</sup> 1:280.4—September 1829. “On the Apocalypse and Millennium” (pp. 1:273-291). Editor (John Tudor).

for any valid hypothesis. Ironically, such an approach undermines the very theological task it seeks to uphold by grounding theology in something other than its own object. The hermeneutical and theological tasks are then determined by secular presuppositions, methodology, and conclusions. Albury's error lay principally in their resorting to a proto-foundationalism by which the witness of Scripture might be demonstrated as self-evident through the literal-typical hermeneutic and the fulfillment in time of biblical promise and type. The method became the message, as prophecy and the premillennial worldview came to be seen and defended as the meaning and essence of the Christian faith and the message of Bible.

#### *a) Shift From Dogmatics to Apologetics*

In spite of Albury's perception, their methodology was not so much drawn from the inherent character of the Bible as raised in tacit response to modernity's skepticism. The Enlightenment's critical approach to Scripture had led to the recognition of various traditions, messages, theologies, and aims among the biblical authors and accounts of biblical contradictions were widespread. In order to combat this, a doctrine of inspiration sought to establish the unity of Scripture. But in this, the Bible was not seen as a "historical, organic whole ordered around a central point, but rather as a quantitative totality."<sup>71</sup> Thus, in order to maintain the doctrine of inspiration it became necessary to interpret various texts through increasingly complex hermeneutical systems, assigning to different texts, differing levels of meaning. The doctrinal center became bound to the inspiration and integrity of the Bible itself and the means by which it is demonstrated. With this, the doctrinal task shifts from articulating "what the Church means by revelation, and how it is that the Church comes to regard this, and this only as revelation, and thus the basis and norm of her message, and as the source of all the knowledge of faith,"<sup>72</sup> to an apologetic of the veracity of Scripture.<sup>73</sup> Its primary task becomes that of

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<sup>71</sup> Weber, *Foundations*, I:236.

<sup>72</sup> Brunner, *Revelation and Reason*, p. 13.



defending Scripture's inherent character first, so that, secondarily, its revelatory word character might be proclaimed.

It seems reasonable that the literalistic hermeneutic of Albury had its roots in Richard Hurd and the two Newtons and their use of prophecy as apology. With these exegetes who had little, if any, interest in defining the future, the futurist hermeneutic began, as prophecy studies expanded to apologetic demand.<sup>74</sup> In an attempt to answer Enlightenment skepticism, prophecy was used to show the fulfillment of predictions as the proof of its divine source and inspiration. The search for fulfilled prophecies slowly shifted from the past to recent past to present and near future. But this could only occur if the prophecies are perspicuous and univocal.

It was the veracity and authority of Scripture, evidenced in the prophetic character of the Bible, that lay at the heart of the premillennialist agenda. It was the foundation upon which the entire system was built and the doctrinal center under which all other doctrines were subjugated. Sandeen, assessing Irving and the premillennial school that would follow in his steps, accurately describes Albury's approach:

The millenarians built their movement upon a literalistic method of biblical interpretation which gave them considerable apologetic advantage. They could confront churchmen who at least tacitly accepted the infallibility of the Scripture and urge them to become serious enough about their biblical faith to believe what was quite literally prophesied. As the swelling of the millenarian ranks demonstrate, this appeal could be quite persuasive. But this was a most hazardous venture. Hazardous, first, because its hermeneutical foundation was insecure. The millenarian utilized a literalistic approach to prophecy not because the author's intention was literalistic—a point of paramount significance and one which the millenarians neglected—but because the climate of opinion in that day offered more support for the literalist than a figurative interpretation. And hazardous, second, because it tied the future of millenarianism to the maintenance of an inerrant and infallible text. The millenarians could not give up belief in the single-level, totally divine document postulated in their theory of interpretation without sacrificing their faith.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> This is almost identical to what would occur later at Princeton. See Sandeen, *Roots*, pp. 114ff. Lefferts Loetscher, *The Broadening Church: A Study of Theological Issues in the Presbyterian Church since 1869* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1954). Bradley J. Longfield, *The Presbyterian Controversy: Fundamentalists, Modernists, and Moderates* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). Mark S. Massa, *Charles Augustus Briggs and the Crisis of Historical Criticism*, Harvard Dissertations in Religion #25, Margaret R. Miles and Bernadette J. Brooken, eds., (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990).

<sup>74</sup> See Oliver, *Prophets and Millennialists*, p. 37.

<sup>75</sup> Sandeen, *Roots*, p. 111.5f.

Sandeen's later criticism of Princeton theology may be equally applied to its progenitors at Albury: "it was not so much a theology as an apologetic, not so much an approach to be discussed as a position to be defended. . . . The continuing tendency to treat every opponent of the Princeton Theology as an atheist or non-Christian created a barrier of distrust and suspicion which prevented fruitful discourse and eventually friendly disagreement."<sup>76</sup> This was certainly the outlook at Albury. *Morning Watch* contributor, P. Borthwick, noted that "those who refuse to look into the meaning of unfulfilled prophecy are guilty of a "partial reading of Scripture."<sup>77</sup> The importance of prophecy study lies in its intimate connection to the essence of the Christian faith and the message of Scripture. Those who refused to look at future or unfulfilled prophecy were challenging the authority of the (whole) Bible and denying faith by refusing "to believe on the simple testimony of God's word."<sup>78</sup> The premillennial system, with its doctrine of inspiration and hermeneutic, had become a necessary article of faith.

### *b) Dubious Certitude*

In light of both Albury's starting assumptions and future interests, the foundations of the Circle's hermeneutic are profoundly ironic. First, it was based upon a doctrine of inspiration largely formed to protect the church from extemporaneous revelation. With this, the Circle could largely agree. Profoundly conservative in politics and faith, they were highly critical of any innovation or change that might redefine either. And yet, their very system is built upon the concept of the progressive nature of revelation and the fact that in their own day God had given a fresh message never before known. Thus, a conservative hermeneutic, devised by the church to anchor revelation to an unchanging and certain source, was received by the Circle and used to introduce new messages, through new means, thus redefining the church and its faith. The hermeneutic they established denied their own defining precept—that of following the simple, literal,

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<sup>76</sup> Sandeen, *Roots*, p. 130.

<sup>77</sup> *TMW* I:46.6.

<sup>78</sup> *TMW* I:47.2.

grammatical meaning of the text—as ever deeper correlations and parallel meanings were extrapolated and made a part of the biblical witness.

Albury's hermeneutical starting point was ironic, too, for its inconsistent correlation between the doctrine of Scripture and Christology. Irving and the men of the *Watch* would suffer terribly in their defense of the doctrine of the two natures of Christ, as frequent attempts to clarify and elaborate their understanding of Jesus' human nature fell on deaf ears. The debates, starting in 1828, were fierce and painful and led to Irving being found guilty of heresy by the Presbytery of London (26 April, 1832) and the Church of Scotland (13 March, 1833). Yet it remains ironic that those who so passionately defended the doctrine of Christ's humanity would, at the same time, be as equally concerned to defend the Bible as wholly divine. To put it differently, it is amazing that those accused of propagating a Nestorian Christology<sup>79</sup> would so uncritically accept and defend a Monophysite doctrine of Scripture. Additionally, and taking the irony a step deeper, Albury's Christology portrayed the Holy Spirit in terms that were dynamic and proximate, while their doctrine of the Bible did the opposite, positing the Spirit in static and historic terms, even as Spiritual gifts were sought and extolled with little critical reflection. This is the beginning of Albury's failure to connect or integrate the more sound or orthodox elements of their theology with the larger systematic whole. The manifestations of tongues and the gifts of the Spirit were without doctrinal parameters, occurring, so to speak, between the two perspectives without the balancing influence of either. Perspectives that were brilliant, well reasoned, and insightful—such as elements of their Christology—remained insufficiently connected to the larger theological paradigm and thus given no functional influence.

A final irony may be found in the Circle's attempt to demonstrate the deity of God, to their rationalistic age, using the tools of the very rationalism they decried. With the knowledge of God increasingly problematic and the content of Scripture ever more dubious, the Circle turned to reason to defend both, and in the process, placed both under reason, which was tacitly and practically made a superior authority. Irving and his circle never discerned the internal contradiction in assigning ultimate authority to both

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<sup>79</sup> The charge is certainly inaccurate and unfair, but nevertheless reflects Albury's strong anti-Eutychianism.

the Bible and the extrinsic demonstration by which its authority is confirmed.<sup>80</sup> Albury's premillennial system attempted to demonstrate the intrinsic veracity of the Scriptures through extrinsic verification, turning to the fulfillment of prophecy, literal-typical methodology, and the progress of history as the undeniable evidences of God's sovereignty and reign over earth. But in this, the secular and material were appealed to, first as supporting evidence and increasingly as independent revelation. Albury had exchanged faith for certitude and the object of the former for the proofs of the latter. Again, the irony is clear. Decrying modern religion, it sought to restore the ancient faith by grasping for rational certainties that answered modern questions. Attempting to return the church to its living God, the Circle introduced a mechanistic doctrine of providence and revelation with little insight or access to God as person. And seeking to revive the spiritual life of the church, the men of the *Watch* made both the subject and object of revelation something other than self-giving of God. Albury's was a proto-foundationalism that sought to revive the ancient faith through modern proofs. That Albury saw modernity as the source of all problems in the church is, in the light of their methodology, doubly ironic.

Irony, yes, yet in another sense these are all but inevitable consequences of their hermeneutic. Overwhelmed by the sea of change rising around them, the Circle turned with the zeal of prophets to the immutable message given by the Spirit through the Bible's formation as the starting point for doctrinal, polemical, apologetic and pastoral labour. The premillennial hermeneutic, created to defend the essential tenets of the faith, would become a means by which Scripture's actual voice was lost amid the clamour of other words, fresh revelations, and appeals to extra-biblical authority. What was released in the opening of Pandora's Box can never be recaptured. Over the brief years of the journal's existence, the men of the *Watch* will extend their interest from revelation found in the relatively innocuous source of history, to that found in the spread of de-

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<sup>80</sup> The members of the Albury Circle never reached Wolterstorff's conclusion: "It was about twenty-five years ago now that I first became perplexed over the challenge so widely issued to religious people that they must have evidence for their religious beliefs—evidence consisting of other beliefs. . . . Eventually I concluded that the culprit in the matter was the assumption that foundationalism. . . . states the truth of the matter concerning proper belief formation." N. Wolterstorff, *John Locke and the Ethics of Belief* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. x.

mocracy and capitalism rising across Europe, their own inner lives and the events that surrounded them, and eventually Babylonian zodiacs.

A major failure of their hermeneutic—grounded as it was in a concept of plenary inspiration deciphered through literal-typological methodology and a teleological center—lay in the deifying of their own goals even as it demonized all others with whom they disagreed. The quest to demonstrate the Bible's intrinsic veracity by seeking extrinsic verification in historical events and experience, led the Circle into a profound subjectivism in which revelation became little more than their own concerns raised to the level of the ultimate. This fact is camouflaged behind their apparently literal interpretation that appeared to offer a method free of any subjective bias. But the concept of type and the malleable nature of prophecy, allowed a word to maintain the appearance of literalism while in fact producing an interpretation precariously subjective and speculative. In practice, their literal interpretation led them to find biblical revelation in an ever increasingly breadth of objects:

In our research, we shall not fail to be astonished at the vast variety and extent of instruction couched, not only under the form of natural things and of symbolical figures, but also under the circumstances of the lives of eminent men, and the events befalling nations.

A footnote to this section goes on:

Creation, or the things of the natural world, appear to have been so formed and appointed as to be accurate types or representations of things belonging to the spiritual world; they are so used throughout the book of God: since, constituted as man is, spiritual truth must be revealed to his understanding, under the image of things with which his senses are conversant.<sup>81</sup>

Albury's subjectivism is perhaps nowhere more clearly seen than their use of types. Heralded by the Circle as the means by which biblical interpretation may be protected from the whims and fancies of human interests, they became instead the very opposite. Albury reconsidered its conclusion that Tyre was to be interpreted as the type of England, for another, more appealing alternative: "Egypt. . . typifies Science and Learning in Christendom,"<sup>82</sup> and as "the most learned nation of Antiquity," could, they con-

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<sup>81</sup> *TMW* II:100.8—March 1830.

<sup>82</sup> *TMW* VI:290.2—December 1832.

cluded, only refer to England.<sup>83</sup> As the fiery polemic between *The Morning Watch* and the Evangelical world intensified, it is not surprising that figural references to their struggles were found predicted in Scripture. "The spiritual antitype of Moab has never been fully made out till of late, when it has been shewn to belong to the Evangelical church of the present time."<sup>84</sup> In an article entitled "Unaccomplished Prophecies now Fulfilling. No. IV," Albury found the Evangelical church prefigured in the plagues inflicted upon Egypt, which were, in their day, finding antitypical manifestation. The Egyptians who dug holes in the sand at the Nile's bank, are likened to "Evangelicals in these days, who would strive after some influence of the Spirit while they reject the Spirit himself. . . . the Tomlines, Mants, Gills, Wesleys, Clarkes, Henrys, Scotts, &c., the whole army of *Libri Critici*—all alike want the life of the living, all alike shew water turned to blood."<sup>85</sup> Conveniently, another enemy of Albury, "the half-brethren of the Evangelical church, the Presbyterians of the North," was found to be typically prefigured in Ammon.<sup>86</sup> The malleable character of prophecy and typology allowed the literal to take a diversity of forms.

In assessing Albury's 'literal' typological method one must ask if, in spite of Albury's best efforts and every claim, it does not actually begin to resemble the classical Alexandrian School? From the earliest days of allegorical interpretation, the dangers of subjectivism were realized and every attempt made to protect this hermeneutical endeavour from extreme flights of fancy. Furthermore, allegorical interpretations were seldom as far-fetched as detractors would lead one to believe, and certainly not necessarily more so than certain "literal" (Antiochian) interpretations. The distinctive of Albury's method is to tie the allegory, not to a spiritual but to the historical referents and to see in them, and their meaning, not illustrations of life and its meaning on the human level but the flow, progress, and meaning of history on a grand scale. But the question remains: is this enough to significantly distinguish Albury's hermeneutic from that of Al-

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<sup>83</sup> *TMW* VI:245—September 1832.

<sup>84</sup> *TMW* VI:290.9.

<sup>85</sup> *TMW* VII: 34.9—March 1833.

<sup>86</sup> *TMW* VI:291.3. The author noted that events were proceeding at such a pace that details of Moab's, Edom's, and Ammon's antitypical manifestations would hopefully be reported in the next issue.

exandria? If the answer is yes, it is most so in their larger hermeneutical theory and perhaps the earliest interpretive work in the journal. But with the journal's later years the macrocosm of a grand narrative sled into the microcosm of their own role and message within the last days. The door opened for extrinsic verification of the Bible had allowed a host of other words to enter all claiming equal—or near equal—revelatory value. The literal-typical method, so promising in theory, proved so plastic in practice, and rendered Scripture incapable of speaking anything beyond the message determined by the Circle's *a priori* perspectives.

God's revealed will and work was shaped to become an extension of Albury's ultimate concerns, deified. As such, they became, in essence, idols, not because of doctrinal error *per se*, but because they had taken the path of the idolater shapes the deity to be the "guarantor, the protector of his political order, his spiritual and intellectual values, his longing, and his need to analyze the world."<sup>87</sup> But the "God" one shapes, by and for their expectations, "is always the god who is subject to us"<sup>88</sup> and thus more idol than real.

That this is so, and that this was occurring through their methodology, was lost to the Circle gathered at Albury. Irving's passionate and impetuous nature led him to see in "their system" only the chance for good, the opportunity to restore to a broken church the certitude of faith, and demonstrate to a doubting age the deity, sovereignty, and purpose of God. In prophecy, hope remained. Oblivious of the weaknesses inherent in their methodology, the Circle pressed on to proclaim the gospel of the prophetic word and their hermeneutic by which it might be discerned.

If any one think that I find too much of Christ and the church in these prophecies, and that I put more into the language that it will bear, let him pause, and reflect whether he may not have formed in his own mind a hasty and mean idea of God's word. . . . Until I learned to think better, I also was held in the error that the prophecies in particular, and the Old-Testament Scriptures in general, were but histories, and anticipations of events, with which we have little to do, save to glean out of them certain texts, to be used in accommodation to the times and persons in the midst of which we live. From this most unworthy and unholy idea of the Divine word having got delivered by the grace of God, I am desirous to deliver others; for so long as it remains, the faith of the

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<sup>87</sup> Weber, *Foundations*, I:212.

<sup>88</sup> Weber, *Foundations*, I:215.

*-Chapter Two-*  
**A Paradigm of Certitude: Albury's Hermeneutical Foundation**

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inspiration of the Scriptures is a mere pretense. God forbid that I should fall into the opposite extreme, of wresting his word to any preconceived notions of my own! I seek to interpret it by the light of the New Testament, and especially of that great canon, that 'spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus;' by comparing spiritual things with spiritual.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> *TMW* III:306.2—June 1831. Edward Irving.



# Chapter Three

## *Prophecy, Revelation, and Revival*

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The point at issue is neither more nor less than what  
God has revealed to be his chief end in creation and redemption ;  
to which end all other acts of God in providence are only supportive.  
Anonymous<sup>1</sup>



### 1. The Centrality of Prophecy

Shortly after the first Albury Conference, Edward Irving wrote his friend and mentor Dr. Chalmers saying, "The second coming of the Lord is the '*point de vue*,' the vantage ground . . . from which, and from which alone, the whole purpose of God can be contemplated and understood."<sup>2</sup> While Chalmers remained unconvinced, Irving's perspective expressed the cornerstone of Albury theology. The Second Coming of Christ was made the lens through which every event and doctrine was interpreted and applied. A new and unique doctrine of revelation, with its premillennial philosophy of history, resultant hermeneutics, and dogmatics, had taken the place of preeminence.

Fundamental to the message of *The Morning Watch* was the belief that their day was one of special revelation, in which the meaning, progress, and goal of history had been uniquely unveiled. This revelation gave the Circle a message they believed to be unprecedented in scope and urgency. It would be wrong, however, to suggest this revelation produced schismatic or heretical interests intentionally pursued by the Circle, for three reasons. First, new revelation of God's immediate purposes in each dispensation was considered normative and therefore expected.<sup>3</sup> Second, because it was revelation of God's plan and work, it remained perfectly consistent with what preceded, only adding

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<sup>1</sup> *TMW* 1:246.8—June 1829. "On the Theology of the Periodical Journals of the Present Day," pp. 1:243-267.  
Anonymous.

<sup>2</sup> Oliphant, *Life of Edward Irving*, p. 255.

<sup>3</sup> *TMW* 1:400.8—September 1829.

new insight and detail.<sup>4</sup> Third, and related to this, the Albury Circle did not see themselves as creators or disseminators of new doctrine, but faithful stewards of traditional orthodoxy reinterpreted, clarified, and presented in the light of a larger view as a corrective to the errors of the age. The Albury Circle sought no major redefinition of theology<sup>5</sup> or separation from the established church.<sup>6</sup> Albury's was a singular vision of the whole, apart from which the church would remain forever ignorant of its purpose and mission. It was not simply a belief in a single narrative theory or even the second coming of Christ *per se*, that inspired Albury. Rather, it was the *sui generis* revelation concerning the reality, timing, and nature of this event, and the unifying correspondence of these to every point in history and every verse of Scripture, that Irving and the Albury Circle made the '*point de vue*,' of their theology.

#### a) Prophecy's Grand Narrative

The primary importance and value of prophecy studies lay first in this grand whole and only secondarily in the specific details. In the end of history was found its purpose and in the French Revolution was found proof that this end had commenced.<sup>7</sup> The promised, prefigured, and unfulfilled had together approached the time of consummation, while the prophetic Scriptures and figural manifestations gave the key to

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<sup>4</sup> "The purpose of the Father has been one from the beginning—to manifest his own glory in the face of Jesus Christ" (TMW II:236.5—June 1830).

<sup>5</sup> For example: "When the Holy Spirit was promised, it was not for the purpose of giving new revelation, but 'he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you'" (TMW I:275.2—September 1829). See also: II:849.9.

<sup>6</sup> It must be noted that prior to Irving's trial by the London Presbytery, *The Morning Watch* stood passionately against schism: "The delusion which has got into many men's minds, and thereby greatly tended to increase the schismatic spirit, is, that established churches are 'Babylon:' this is not sufficient for the Baptists and they separate themselves from the Non-conformists; and so on *ad infinitum*" (I:703.6—December 1829). The writer goes on to say that "all Christendom is alike Babylon" and it would be foolish to think that in a particular denomination or church one might consider themselves dwelling "on Mt. Sion." See especially "On Schism" (II:201-16) and II:352; 820.5; 821.3.

<sup>7</sup> *The Morning Watch* commends Isaac Newton for correctly grasping the progressive nature of revelation: "That such a time of unveiling the mystery would arrive, Newton had the sagacity to perceive; and he also assigned the true reason why these prophecies were not understood before: 'the time is not yet come,' says he, 'for understanding them perfectly, because the main revolution predicted in them is not yet come to pass'.....Till then, we must content ourselves with interpreting what hath been already fulfilled." TMW I:294.9—September 1829. *The Morning Watch*, of course, saw "the main revolution" as having occurred, opening the prophetic nature of the Scriptures as never before possible.

understanding how these may be discerned, combined, and properly ordered. "The purpose of the prophetic part of revelation is to shew the fore-appointment by the Lord," of the end of all events, and "if we are given to understand this, we may look for the marks of that purpose in the progress of events, as well as in the form and ordinances of the church."<sup>8</sup> The whole includes each constituent part and is alone the means by which they may be understood. And, conversely—and in keeping with the Romanticism of their day—each prophetic element in turn testifies to the truth of the whole: "Any one strain of prophecy understood, is the whole purpose of God understood."<sup>9</sup> As the only means of discerning the single meaning contained in the dual elements of history and Scripture, prophecy studies became the vantage ground from which the essential message of both could be interpreted. Only after discerning the teleological aspects of the purpose of God, could specifics of the prophetic picture receive proper interpretation and application, for only "He 'who knoweth the end from the beginning' will be so to have arranged the intermediate steps as to portray in them as well the cause of their origin and the mode of their subsistence, as the object of their end. . . . It is this principle which governs prophecy."<sup>10</sup>

### *b) The efficacy of the Prophetic Word*

The Circle's perception of their work under this principle was two-dimensional. On the one hand, they perceived themselves as teachers of prophetic truth and thus disseminators of that unique revelation given for their day. But their labours amounted to more than mere announcement. Increasingly the circle saw themselves as antitypical

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<sup>8</sup> *TMW* I:396.5—September 1829. "On God's Ultimate Revealed Purpose in Creation and New Creation, part II" I:392-420. Robert Baxter, esq. The first installment of the article may be found at I:225-239. See also *TMW* I:280.4 where John Tudor describes the Apocalypse as specifically that place where "we derive the full and certain knowledge of the reign of Christ upon earth, and learn to understand the long and varied series of events by which this glorious kingdom is prepared and announced."

<sup>9</sup> *TMW* II:64.4—March 1830. "Interpretation of all the Old-Testament Prophecies Quoted in the New" (fifth installment, pp. 55-99). Edward Irving. Irving's thought finds reflection elsewhere in the journal: "Each revelation, therefore, however short, includes the end—the finishing of the mystery of God. . . —the restitution of all things" (II:237.8—March 1830).

prophets whose testimony before the world's final Babylon was part of God's effecting and fulfilling the very message they proclaimed.<sup>11</sup> They were themselves, in the hand of a sovereign God, both inspired prophets and prophetic act, as word and type coalesced to proclaim and effect the single message of the end times.

In the fourth issue of their first year, an anonymous writer set forth the principle that prophecy, by its inherent character, played this necessary, two sided, role:

Our present argument leads us to mention only one [result of prophetic study, of many possible], namely that it records before hand the purposes of God in a manner which his church may understand, so as to derive from thence the continual assurance that nothing happens by chance, but all things are minutely determined and overruled by him; while on the other hand, such a degree of mystery overhangs it, that the men of the world are repelled from its study and therefore neither presumptuously attempt to forward nor impiously to counteract the designs of God.<sup>12</sup>

This two-fold efficacy, by which truth was revealed and effected in the same act, constituted the Bible's necessary claim upon the church and practical usefulness for those seeking its reviving. First, it served the faithful as an infallible witness of God's immutable plan by recording "before hand" his purposes. Study of prophecy allowed the church to see both promise and fulfillment and so find "continual assurance" of God's sovereign control over every event. This general truth was enhanced by two important details: this revelation was not confined to the great events of history but included details that were minute and even personal. Second, this prophetic witness, while complex, was nevertheless perspicuous. But this lucidity extended only to the faithful. To the "men of the world" the prophetic scriptures were shrouded in mystery, repelling them from prophetic truth and preventing the ungodly from either advancing or thwarting it by their own means. Thus, the very proclamation of prophetic truth, bore a dialectical function, as both assurance and judgment were effected, touching the faithful and apostate alike with a word that produced the very reality proclaimed. The prophetic nature of Scrip-

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<sup>10</sup> *TMW* 1:396.1—September 1829. Another example of the same thought: "To know the great purpose of God which he will mark out from the beginning to the end of time. . . is to receive a key to the opening of all the mysteries of creation and providence; a key to the revelation committed to us, which shall reconcile all things" (1:396.9).

<sup>11</sup> This is not an uncommon occurrence in revivalist or remnant theologies. See Andrew Walker, *Restoring the Kingdom: The Radical Christianity of the House Church Movement* (Guildford, Surrey: Eagle, 1998).

<sup>12</sup> *TMW* 1:525.5—December 1825. "On the Gradual Unfolding of Prophecy." Anonymous; as the lead article of the issue, the author is likely John Tudor.

ture brought assurance to the church even as it constrained the ungodly in their unbelief. To the former was revealed their certain place in the march of God's plan. In the latter was revealed their true disinterest of God through their ignorance and rejection of spiritual realities. And over all was revealed a sovereign God at work precisely as promised and described in Scripture and prefigured in time.

This combination of teleological revelation and the unique efficacy of the prophetic Word, gave their message a peerless urgency. While ages past had the luxury of waiting for prophecy to be fulfilled, and thereby enjoying the assurance of faith consequently produced, the present age was given prophecy to prepare it for those events soon to manifest.

The subjects [of this dispensation] are not like minor prophecies, which are of chief importance when fulfilled; and by which fulfillment the faith of the church is confirmed and conviction produced in unbelievers. No: it will be too late, when they are actually accomplished, to refer to them, either for the comfort of the believer or the conviction of the infidel. Now it is they are to be declared, to raise the expectations of the church, and animate her in her labours and her sufferings; and to awaken the enemies of the Lord.<sup>13</sup>

The prophetic announcement of the coming millennial kingdom was not only the singular content and message of Scripture, it was a singularly efficacious word and consequently accepted by the Albury Circle as the only hope and only word for their age. The message that could alone revive the church was that of Jesus' impending "return to earth as King of kings and Lord of lords."<sup>14</sup>

But revival meant more than the restoration of some tepid spirituality. The revelation given in prophecy provided the faithful with the means to discern, denounce, and resist the forces of antichrist and arrest "the progress of high-minded infidelity" unleashed with the French Revolution. "Whilst the enemies are occupying the field of science and philosophising in the philosophy of the day" prophecy studies were able "to strengthen the church, by showing forth the deeper depths of science and philosophy

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<sup>13</sup> *TMW* II:410.6—June 1830. This is an unknown quote of Rev. Wm. Marsh of Colchester used by an anonymous author in a review article of *On the Principles of Interpretation as applied to the Prophecies of Holy Scripture: a discourse, and etc.* by John Pye Smith.

which lie among her records, that her sons may be girded to the warfare and give a reason for the hope that is in them.”<sup>15</sup> The *point de vue* of prophetic revelation allowed science and philosophy to be assessed and their real natures unmasked by the biblical text. This prophetic corrective addressed society’s foolish courtship with modern science and philosophy, confronting the worldly optimism of progress that had crept into the church, shaping its ministries and message, while blinding it to the magnitude of its worldly depravity.

The second coming of Christ had indeed become the “‘*point de vue*,’ the vantage ground” from which every aspect of the church and world was contemplated and understood. The Albury Circle had created a complex interpretive system. Its principles were fundamentally axiomatic, providing the Circle with an antecedent principle from which every historical accident and ecclesial doctrine received definition and systematic correlation. The importance and centrality of the prophetic methodology of Edward Irving and the Albury Circle cannot be overstated. The worldview expressed in *The Morning Watch* is entirely shaped by Albury’s *a priori* expectations regarding the Second Advent and the hermeneutic created to draw this reality from the Bible’s every word. The pre-millennial return of Christ became not only the dogmatic center but also the compass by which the church was assessed and its life defined. Irving saw himself as a prophet of the last days, pronouncing the Word that alone could save the church: “I feel that I have a duty to discharge to the church in these interpretations, which is, to electrify her paralysed faith, by bringing it into contact with that battery of truth concerning Israel’s restoration and Immanuel’s coming which is contained in the prophets. The Lord prosper the remedy!”<sup>16</sup> Thus, prophecy was viewed by Albury as the necessary and practical means to bring revival to the church, the very act of which prepared it, through the sovereign work of God, to meet the last days even as it condemned the faithless to judgment and

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<sup>14</sup> *TMW* II: 850.3—December 1830. “On the Reality of Bearing the Cross of Christ.” Anonymous. To bear the cross was to preach against the prevailing attitude of the day, as Athanasius did defending the Trinity and Luther did articulating justification by faith. Albury’s prophetic message to their own day was seen to be within this lineage.

<sup>15</sup> *TMW* II: 1:233.6—June 1829. “God’s Ultimate Revealed Purpose, part I.” Robert Baxter.

<sup>16</sup> *TMW* II: 83.6—March 1830. “Interpretations of all the Old-Testament Prophecies Quoted in the New, V.” Edward Irving.

the tribulation to come. To say “prophecy” was to describe the character, marrow, and message of the Bible, and deductively, all that it meant to be Christian.

The study of prophecy is essentially necessary, because without it no man can know the mind of God. Without knowing the mind of God he cannot be conformed to it; and without being conformed to it he cannot be prepared to meet him. Preparation for this meeting is the sum and substance of all religion<sup>17</sup>

## 2. Revelation through the Progress of Time

### *a) Hermeneutics and History*

The hermeneutical task of Albury was to articulate the Bible’s historical witness, providing differentiation and correlation between the literal and typical, historical and prophetic, in hopes of awakening a slumbering church and nation to the awful reality of its position. The Albury Circle approached Scripture primarily as a historical source—albeit inspired, inerrant, and wholly unique—yet nevertheless, a setting forth of the prophetic-historical facts which together defined God’s revelation. Each historical event possessed its own intrinsic meaning, correlated to a specific text or texts and mediated through them. Together these texts and correlative historical accidents reflected meaning at various levels of increasing importance. First was the event itself, which was interpreted strictly in terms of its original historical setting and “natural” cause and effect under the sovereignty of God. Second, were the eternal truths that lay behind every event and found in the event a partial, though perspicuous, manifestation. Third, the prophetic nature of each event rendered it a foreshadowing of some yet future and greater reality. And finally, the progress and sum of each constituent part enabled the interpreter to determine both the precise meaning of each event and its relation to the grand narrative of God’s will and work.

Edward Irving, in March, 1833, stated the interpretive principles that had guided *The Morning Watch* from its inception:

No human intelligence can break the seal of God’s purpose, which it is the prerogative of the Word to open; and which the Word openeth not by words merely, but by acts producing things outwardly existent; to every one of which acts the Holy Spirit is a necessary co-operator. Therefore it is vain to think to get at the purpose of God other-

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<sup>17</sup> *TMW* VI:159.9f—September 1832.

wise than by searching into the acts of God outwardly manifested in things. . . . Therefore I say, that all reasoning, both of the *a priori*, or *a posteriori* kind; that is, from the laws of human reason, or the observation of outward things; is, when applied to the purpose of God, but one method, which is the examination of the works of God.<sup>18</sup>

The emphasis here lies on "God's purpose" and the means of it being discerned. Irving, denying reason's unaided ability to grasp this purpose, affirms the role of the Word to make it known.<sup>19</sup> But the Word gives not himself as dialectical subject and object of revelation, but comes as illuminator of an external reality expressed through the events, progress, and end of history. This illumination occurs "not by words merely," that is by the mere giving of Scripture or even by the Holy Spirit, "but by acts producing things outwardly existent." There are several consequences to this approach. First, the Scriptures, while unique in their authority and reliability, are primarily addressed as records of those historical events in which God has clearly acted and prophetic principles by which the antitypical fulfillment of these events might be discerned and incorporated into the larger scheme. Second, history, as the arena of God's acts, becomes permeated with his revelation. Third, the Word becomes not that which is revealed or the decisively unique point at which revelation occurs, but that, which illumines one to receive the revelation that is made available elsewhere. With this, the traditional roles of both the Word and the Spirit are transformed and commingled. Revelation occurs not in and through the Word to which the Spirit bears witness, but through acts occurring in history in which both are co-labourers. Finally, in light of these, the nature of revelation shifts from the relational to the propositional, from God's encountering the human creature with himself to the illumining of objective realities under God's hand, but, external and independent from him, and which must in turn be noetically or pistically apprehended.

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<sup>18</sup> *TMW* VII:52.6f—March 1833. "On the Prophetical Aspect of all God's Works and Ways." Edward Irving. While written at the end of the journal's circulation and therefore reflecting a slightly more evolved and detailed hypothesis, it nevertheless expresses a perspective consistent to all seven volumes.

<sup>19</sup> The contributors to *The Morning Watch* were profoundly skeptical of reason's ability to discover or understand spiritual truths. Of the many citations that may be given, the following are typical and informative: *TMW* I:45.2, 626.1; II:172.3, 267.7; III:493.8; IV: 117.5, 122.3, 395.3, 399.6; V:80.1, 289.7, 296.7, 299.6; VI:250.9, 267.9; VII:16.1, 33.8, 95.9f, 131.3. It is worth noting that some evolution occurs in this. While the early volumes are wary of reason, Albury's own arguments are usually presented as well reasoned arguments. It seems the goal in these first years is not to deny reason but redeem it from the secularizing use the church has made of it. By volume five this has changed and *The Morning Watch* is quite skeptical of any use reason might play. In several articles mention is made of "the bar of reason" which is understood as the antithesis to trusting the Spirit.



These issues are foundational to the journal's understanding of revelation and history and appear in different forms throughout its circulation. Two years previously, (December of 1830), Irving wrote on the revelation bearing aspects of history with regard to the restoration of the Jews to Palestine:

[Our detractors] may indeed think it of small importance how they believe, as to what they look upon as a mere historical fact, and not a spiritual or saving truth. But they greatly err: the truths connected with the restoration of Israel are the truths which bring the spiritual and invisible actings of God into collision with the things of this visible world, and bear up the doctrine of providence in human affairs, of prophecy foreshewing that providence, of a real personal coming of the Lord, the resurrection of the saints, and the redemption of the earth and of his kingdom thereon for ever: into which saving hope they can not enter, because they will not understand and receive the faith of the future history of the Jewish people. . . with the belief of which they stand or fall.<sup>20</sup>

Here, again, we see the central and defining tenets of Albury's hermeneutic. Irving criticizes those who miss a far deeper reality by looking on an event as "a mere historical fact." For the historical event, as an act of God, is itself revelatory, disclosing a portion of his work while simultaneously prefiguring ultimate and teleological realities, which combined unveil the spiritual ideal behind them. Christian doctrines, deduced from "the spiritual and invisible actings of God," are the expressions of spiritual reality, not merely manifested in time, but actually a part of the historic fabric. Tudor writes: "The spiritual mysteries can only be understood by means of visible things and historic facts; the unknown is revealed by help of the known."<sup>21</sup> Perhaps most intriguing is the fact that Israel's restoration to Palestine though not yet a historical reality, was viewed by Irving, in so far as Scripture's prediction required a literal fulfillment, as a historic fact. Thus, historical events, both those that have occurred in the past and those typologically prefigured and awaiting realization, reveal the nature and intentions of God and thus "bear up doctrine." To view an event as "mere historical fact" was to deny both its revelatory character and God who acts within it. To deny any prophecy a literal, historical fulfillment was tantamount to apostasy for it annulled the literal word of the biblical text, its spiritual intent, and its typological promise of salvation.

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<sup>20</sup> *TMW* 11:784.9—December 1830. "Interpretation of all the Old Testament Prophecies Quoted in the New." Irving goes on to say that the person who does not understand a national restoration of Israel does not understand "any part of Scripture."

*b) Progressive Revelation*

These issues were further shaped by Albury's perception of the progressive nature of history and revelation. An anonymous article published in June 1832 states: "God, in *revealing* his will and purpose by his word given to his servants the prophets, made the communication progressively. . . . God, in *unfolding* the revelation of his will and purpose, has followed the same method: He has opened the interpretation of Scripture progressively."<sup>22</sup> The progressive nature of revelation was raised primarily in answer to critics who contested the stress *The Morning Watch* placed on prophecy studies. If prophecy was indeed as important as Albury suggests, why had such studies only recently come into vogue? The response of *The Morning Watch* is ironic, fideistic, and illuminating. As God's revelation occurs in history, it is impossible for any one time or place to bear its full reality.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, history's movement toward a specific conclusion demands fresh revelation relevant for each unique dispensation. Revelation must, therefore, occur in multiple events spread over history, moving time towards its fulfillment and bearing witness to this reality even as it occurs. That their own day brought such interest and passion to prophetic studies was itself revelatory and thus a sign, itself, that the very end they sought to explain was almost upon the world.

But all this suggests the doctrine of the progressive revelation of history is more than a mere polemical devise. Indeed, it is a fundamental and determining concept, tacitly implied in Albury's literal-typical methodology, and forming the very heart of the premillennial system of *The Morning Watch*. One writer could state: "We see God's great purpose of self-manifestation moving onto completion in the course of time, and perfecting itself in the new creation."<sup>24</sup> This writer, positing that the six days of creation

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<sup>21</sup> *TMW* VI:85.5—September 1832.

<sup>22</sup> *TMW* V:357.3—June 1832. On the progressive nature of revelation see also: *TMW* I:37.3; II:1.7; the anonymous (though probably Tudor) article entitled "On the Gradual Unfolding of Prophecy," *TMW* I:525-42; and "Review of the Last Days, by the Rev. Edward Irving," *TMW* I:115-31.

<sup>23</sup> "Revelation of the infinite God must come" to humanity "by degrees" and "progressive" revelation, "both that the successive steps may be followed, and that the comprehension may have time to expand, and receive truths in detail which are too vast for its immediate grasp" (*TMW* II:1.7—March 1830).

<sup>24</sup> *TMW* IV:143.6—September 1830. R. B. (Robert Baxter?).

typologically prefigured the six ages of history,<sup>25</sup> considered each to be “very good” but only a developing part of “the great whole.” It is this very “incompleteness” of each constituent part “which points to the great whole as its perfection.”<sup>26</sup> While the occasional epiphany may give unique revelatory insight these are not to be interpreted in isolation. Rather, the full meaning of any event is only to be understood from the perspective of the whole, as but one part in the connectedness of divinely governed historical progress.<sup>27</sup>

Underlying the hermeneutic of *The Morning Watch* is a tacit but determinative philosophy of history. This philosophy is very similar to explicit statements in contemporary premillennialism, and the writings of late twentieth century dispensationalism give an illuminating perspective on *The Morning Watch*. Charles Ryrie, quoting Karl Lowith, defines a “correct philosophy of history” as “a systematic interpretation of universal history in accordance with a principle by which historical events and successions are unified and directed toward ultimate meaning.”<sup>28</sup> Ryrie later notes that this definition centers on three points: “(I) the recognition of ‘historical events and successions,’

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<sup>25</sup> “As he created all things in six days, and rested on the seventh, hallowing it, so has he ordained in six successive ages to work out the work of all new creation, and added a seventh age as an eternal one, the age of rest and sanctified glory. These seven ages are, —1. the age before the Fall, or Adam age; 2. the age until the Flood, or Noah age; 3. the age until the deliverance of the church, or Patriarchal age; 4. the age of the Jewish church; 5. the age of the Gentile church; 6. the age of the Millennial church; and 7 the age of the Resurrection church” (*TMW* IV:134.9f). The six day motif was not new to *The Morning Watch* but was one of the most common formulas in medieval eschatology. See Adriaan H. Bredero, “The Announcement of the Coming of the Antichrist and the Medieval Concept of Time,” *Prophecy and Eschatology*, Ed. by Michael Wilks (Oxford: Blackwells, 1994), p. 4. Bredero cites Augustine and Gregory the Great as the source of this perspective.

<sup>26</sup> *TMW* IV:138.7. The value and necessity of the prophetic Scriptures lies in their inclusive character, for the prophetic “contains the sum and substance of all religion, as the greater includes all its subordinates” (I:247.3—June 1829).

<sup>27</sup> It is intriguing to note here that much of the criticism leveled against premillennial dispensationalism has been its alleged destruction of the Bible’s unity. For example Oswald T. Alliss held that in dispensationalism “the Bible ceases to be a self-consistent whole”—“Modern dispensationalism and the Law of God,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 8 (15 July 1936): p. 272. Theologian Louis Berkhof felt dispensationalism was “divisive in tendency, dismembering the organism of Scripture with disastrous results”—*Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941), p. 291. Such criticisms are, in part, unwarranted. In the case of *The Morning Watch*, the premillennial system provided a strict unifying principle that is viewed as a necessary component of all exegetical and theological work if these were to be rightly done. It is not for lack of unifying principle that one may criticize premillennialism but whether the unity it suggests was built upon a false premise—the immediate end of Gentile dispensation—and a wrong understanding of the Bible’s center and message.

<sup>28</sup> Karl Lowith, *Meaning and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), p. 1. Quoted in Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, p. 17. Underlying the whole premillennial structure is a general philosophy of history which, while usually tacit and unexpressed, is nevertheless an axiomatic and defining aspect of Christian understanding.

or a proper concept of the progress of revelation in history; (2) the unifying principle; and (3) the ultimate goal of history.”<sup>29</sup> These three points form an *a priori* axiom under which all Scripture is interpreted and all doctrine formed. “The Scriptures per se are not a philosophy of history, but they contain one. It is true that the Bible deals with ideas—but with ideas that are interpretations of historical events. This interpretation of the meaning of historical events is the task of theology.”<sup>30</sup> Premillennialism’s literal hermeneutic demands a historicist understanding of revelation, and the fruit of this union is a unique and determinative philosophy of history.

Tudor explains the correlation of history and prophecy as follows:

We must therefore study the spiritual mystery by continually referring to past history, which typified it, and which is the form and the language by which it is expressed; and we shall find brought out by this study the further truth, that the spiritual also has its historic fulfilment—a realization in time and place of all that had been typified and symbolized beforehand and is not received spiritually in doctrine; both incorporated in the church and its history, as the types and doctrines of the Old Testament were embodied in the person and history of our Lord.<sup>31</sup>

In *The Morning Watch*’s premillennial system, God is understood to have acted in history, not once or rarely but through every event, from creation to intended climax. The perceived nature of this progression, together with the final unifying principle of the millennial kingdom, form a system under which history and its revelation, scripture and its witness, and doctrine and its teaching may be interpreted and fit into a systematic whole. This system in turn determines how each event or verse is to be understood. “The method in which all things are made to stand together in Christ. . . is by putting them in order.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Charles Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, p. 17.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *TMW* VI:85.6—September 1832. Compare: “Fixed principles of interpretation can only be obtained in one way—namely, by taking those prophecies which have been undoubtedly fulfilled; carefully studying the terms in which they are expressed; and carefully comparing them with those events in history by which they were accomplished; and applying the principles thus ascertained to those prophecies which refer to events yet future” (*TMW* II:451.3). “A symbol always rests upon a fact, past or to come, in history or in prophecy; never upon a metaphor or figure” (*TMW* II:782.2—Irving).

<sup>32</sup> *TMW* IV:132.6.

*c) Historicist Revelation and the Premillennial System*

The Albury meetings hosted by Henry Drummond, and attended by the leading figures in prophecy studies, had succeeded in producing a system by which the status of the church might be discerned and its life and ministry given direction and renewal through the fresh revelation offered through the prophecy. This system, described through the pages of *The Morning Watch*, offered a single means by which the great questions raised by the modern age could be singularly addressed. God's will and purpose was indeed knowable through the combined witness of history and the Bible. His divinity and nature, as well as the truth of the Bible and the nature of history, were clearly revealed through prophecy's unveiling of God's sovereignty over nations, time, and revelation. And God's intended goal, essentially unknown to the church from its inception, was now brilliantly disclosed through a myriad of detail. It was upon this unveiling of a previous unknown reality that Albury defined and built its mission.

But one must ask, what exactly has been made known in this revelation? Several potential answers may be suggested. First, one might see the central object of revelation being the unified course and end of history. What had appeared as isolated events and mere accidents of history are rather shown to be the acts of God in time by which history is correlated and moved to a specific and divinely intended end. A second possibility might see the Kingdom of God as the object or center of revelation. Here the true nature and course of history are determined by its end, and in the light of which the whole may be discerned. Third, one might see prophetic revelation as giving a unifying character, and thus a certain validation, to Scripture. Through the literal-typical hermeneutic—i.e. its combined realism and prophetic character—the Bible, through its diverse genres, authorship, and content is given a single unifying meaning. But in the end, it is not any one of these that occupies the center of Albury's attention but again the unified whole. What was the precise content of revelation in Albury's premillennial system? In the mind of the Albury Circle, this appears best answered by saying the system itself. Under the premillennial aegis alone is found the interpretive and unifying key to each of the above.

It remains open, however, whether such a system may properly be called *revelation*. Albury's repeated insistence on the inherent perspicuity and reasonableness of prophecy implies it should be defined more as a category of human knowledge than object of God's revelation. The Circle's use and explication of the prophetic economy is analogous to that of science reaching past what is known, to grasp that which lay immediately beyond. In the premillennial system, revelation becomes not that which is "given" but that which is discovered through proper methodology.

We see then in *The Morning Watch's* understanding of revelation a decidedly modern frame of reference and method. The problematic knowledge of God is overcome not through personal act in which God gives himself, but through an interpretive system and its economy by which signs and events coalesce into a "revelatory" composite. Albury's premillennial system redefines revelation from the self-giving of God in history to an interpretation of history, and thus establishing itself on the very rationalism it decries and seeks to replace. Revelation, while an act of God in time, becomes a part of time and thus part of this world. Revelation, rather than remaining an absolute and personal act of God,<sup>33</sup> becomes necessarily bound to human activity and the rational contemplation of it. But this suggests a system little different than that which they sought to dislodge and reflects again the very modern character of Albury's labours. The emphasis of revelation, i.e. its special and unique object, was not God as traditionally understood "Thou" but "something" else. The content and veracity of the Christian faith came to be described and defined through that which was external to it.

The malleable character of prophecy allowed the Scriptures and history to assume the very shape determined by Albury's presuppositions and literal-typical hermeneutic. This shape was in turn identified as the Bible's inherent character from which the prophetic interpretation and doctrine, deductively reasoned and conjoined to the larger system, took on a revelatory character. Albury's premillennialism became a self-perpetuating system in which theory, Scripture, and history, combined in ever tightening symmetry, to form a system that explained each constituent part in terms of a single nar-

rative and teleology. It must be said that the Albury Circle did not intend or see themselves as creating a system. Nor would they hold that such a system was the object or focal point of revelation. Nevertheless, the Albury Circle was a product of its age and thus a theology shaped by romanticism's love for grand, all-inclusive systems, the enlightenment's rational methodology and their own subjective polemic. These coalesced to form a system that was tacitly understood as God's final revelation and explicitly used to interpret Scripture, define dogma and prepare the church to face the last days. But as we have seen, the very core of that which they decry had become the paradigm of their own methodology. Unable to recognize or distance themselves from their own cultural perspective, they called for an end times revival from the platform of a rationalistic systemization. Theirs was a cataclysm described in enlightenment prose, a coming apocalypse defined, delineated, and declaimed with Newtonian precision. Apocalyptic scenarios were posited in terms analogous to the culture's understanding of doctrine in general and the basis of theology was sought in historicist axioms. This produced a message inconsistent with the Christological center of the Gospel and which ultimately contradicted the faith they sought to restore. Yet it is from this perspective that the Albury Circle assessed their world and the church and endeavoured to bring to both the corrective the prophetic scriptures demanded.

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<sup>33</sup> See Emil Brunner, *Revelation and Reason*, trans. Olive Wyon (trans. of *Offebahrung und Vernunft: Die Lehre von der christlichen Glaubenserkenntnis*, Zurich: 1941; Wake Forest, North Carolina: Chanticleer Publishing Company, Inc., 1946), p. 23ff.

### 3. Last Days' Revelation to a Failing Church

"We are of the opinion that Christendom  
is full of infidelity."  
Anonymous<sup>34</sup>

#### a) *The Spirit of Antichrist and the Character of the Age*

Albury's criticism of culture and church alike begins with their understanding of Catholicism in prophecy. Their perspective, reflecting centuries of anti-Catholic virulence and speculation, was obviously not new. Protestants, and even many Catholics, had long identified the Papacy and church structure, with all that would be wrong in the world's last days. The fear that the Antichrist would actually arise from within the church may be found as early as the fourth century in Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers.<sup>35</sup> For centuries, the writings of Joachim were used by ecclesial revolutionaries to denounce the institutional church and the papacy.<sup>36</sup> This theme finds repeated use well before the Reformation: from an anonymous *propheta* who proclaimed Papal power was proof of Rome's link with the Antichrist and burnt as a heretic in Paris in 1209,<sup>37</sup> to the English followers of Wycliffe, the French Waldensians, and the Czech theologian Jan Hus and his disciples, all of whom used biblical apocalyptic to identify and denounce "the Pope as the Beast or his consort the Great Harlot, drunk with the blood of saints and martyrs."<sup>38</sup> The Reformation brought a new depth and meaning to this vindictive. First, differences were accentuated as the dispute shifted from issues of right or wrong, truth or

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<sup>34</sup> *TMW* I:247.6—June 1829.

<sup>35</sup> Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More*, pp. 273f. Walter K. Price, *The Coming Antichrist* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974).

<sup>36</sup> Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, pp. 110, 158f. Marjorie Reeves, *op.cit.*. Reeves points out (p. 306ff) that it was pseudo-Joachimist writings that actually addressed political issues. On the influence of Joachim see also G. Leff, *Heresy in the Later Middle Ages: The Relation of Heterodoxy to Dissent c. 1250-c. 1450* (Manchester: 1967).

<sup>37</sup> Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, p. 81.



error, *within* the church to being in the right church altogether. The terms "Protestant" and "Catholic" came to denote mutually exclusive worldviews as each saw the other, not as errant members of one family or even a demonic Fifth Column within, but as outsiders and aliens, Godless and antichrist.<sup>39</sup> In the wake of the Reformation, Protestants across England, creatively and consistently, identified Rome as the Antichrist, persecutor of the true church and faith.<sup>40</sup> Decidedly eschatological, these theories, and the precise identification within history, became concepts of great importance with *The Morning Watch*.

While resolutely Protestant since the enthronement of William and Mary, Britain had grown increasingly tolerant of Catholicism on both the popular and legislative levels.<sup>41</sup> The Gordon Riots effectively marked the end of popular persecution of Catholics in Britain. The Relief Acts of 1778 and 1791 granted Catholics unheard of liberties, and with the Relief Act of 1829, disabilities had all but disappeared. To Thomas Arnold, Headmaster of Rugby, contemporary of Irving, and antagonist of the Albury School, these were hopeful signs of progress; to the Albury Circle these events bore an apocalyptic hue. There are two reasons for this. First, conservative and inveterate, the men of the *Watch* were inclined to maintain and protect the traditions they inherited. The Reformation's anti-Catholic polemic was defended as an axiom of Protestant faith,<sup>42</sup> as was the exclusionist perspective that emphasized the sharp antithesis between Protestant Christianity and Catholic apostasy. As Irving's ministerial assistant, A. J. Scott, described the difference: "The Catholic church was, from Peter and John to Luther and Melancthon, a continuous but gradually troubled and polluted stream; the

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<sup>39</sup> Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More*. pp. 274.

<sup>39</sup> Irving's assessment: "The true church was in the midst of the Papacy, and there only till the Reformation" (*TMW* IV:78.9).

<sup>40</sup> Katherine R. Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain, 1530-1645* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

<sup>41</sup> See Sheridan Gilley and W. J. Sheils, eds., *A History of Religion in Britain: Practice and Belief from the Pre-Roman Times to the Present* (Oxford: Blackwells, 1994), p. 234ff. Anthony Wood, *Nineteenth Century Britain 1815-1914 Second Edition* (Harlow Essex: Longman 1993), pp. 73-77. Eric J. Evans, *The Forging of the Modern State: Early Industrial Britain, 1783-1870* (London: Longman Group Limited, 1994), pp. 204-207.

Reformation was a precipitation of the gathered mud. The original stream flowed on, new-named The Protestant Church: the sediment, now, for the first time a distinct individual object, was the Romish Apostasy."<sup>43</sup>

But second, and more importantly, prophetic revelation provided unique illumination on current events and required Rome, the French Revolution, and Britain's response to both be examined under its iridescence. While the fall of Catholicism in France was interpreted by Albury as vindication of the Protestant cause, the Circle was nevertheless horrified to find Britain, on the very eve of the "harlot's" destruction, not only reluctant to renounce the sin and apostasy of Catholicism, but to actually receive it as an acceptable alternative deserving legal protections. Britain, they feared, was in danger of rejecting its Protestant heritage for "another gospel," turning from God and the role he had given them in the last days, to the Antichrist and the spirit of the age. The Relief Acts were viewed entirely from an apocalyptic frame of reference: "As a nation we have even identified ourselves with Babylon, as if to record in the most public manner our disbelief of the threatened vengeance of God."<sup>44</sup> Edward Irving, in the article *On the Antichristian Apostasy*, a polemic against the Catholic Church, suggests the issues at stake with the question "whether we shall remain an Anti-catholic and Protestant kingdom or whether we shall take the seed of the serpent. . . again into our councils and administration?"<sup>45</sup>

The Albury Circle expected the Antichrist to rise from apostate Catholicism in two distinct forms: first, as a *principle* of ungodliness or infidelity, the second being a

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<sup>42</sup>The apostasy of the church "prophesied by Christ and the Apostles, and indeed all the Prophets," is "the system of which the Pope of Rome is the head" (TMW I:100.2—March 1829). "The Papacy is an apostasy, an antichrist, as putting something else in the seat of Christ, and thus adding to the finished work of the only Saviour" (II:485.4—September 1830). See also: I:526.7, II: 485.5, II:765.9, III:17.4, III:262.6, V:11.5, V:260.4-5.

<sup>43</sup>TMW II:169.9—March 1830. Albury felt this separation must be maintained lest the Protestant churches lose their legitimacy: The Roman church, by calling the Council of Trent and "putting forth its confession in opposition to the Confession of Auxburg, did in that public act, by which it is still bound, proclaim itself an apostasy. . . Down to the present day, every Protestant who calls the Papacy a true church, does, in so doing, plead guilty to the sin of schism"(TMW I:534.2).

<sup>44</sup> TMW I:288.2—September 1829. "On the Apocalypse and the Millennium." John Tudor.

<sup>45</sup> TMW I:102.1—March 1829.

later *personification* of this.<sup>46</sup> With the storming of the Bastille and the Reign of Terror, Catholic France had fallen, revealing its true character and God's judgment on its apostasy. The Albury Circle was appalled to see the effect of the French Revolution spread across Europe, "affecting in its consequences not merely France, but the whole of Christendom, and bringing about moreover, by the evil principles it disseminated, that more tremendous second earthquake felt throughout the whole world."<sup>47</sup> These principles would soon find antitypical personification in a last day's Man of Wickedness who would rise from the ashes of Catholicism. "We are now able, by the experience of eighteen centuries, to separate between these two Antichrists, and to perceive that this last Infidel, shall be the personal Antichrist which the early Fathers expected."<sup>48</sup>

The French Revolution became a key to understanding God's revelation, not only as a point of temporal triangulation, but as an unveiling of the very spiritual issues at work in the last days. The French Revolution unveiled the fact that prophecy and history were intricately and beautifully interlaced to form a complex image of the world's greatest realities, foretelling and manifesting, and foretelling again with each new mani-

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<sup>46</sup> This is perhaps the most accurate way to express a complex and multifaceted topic within *The Morning Watch*. In its early issues, more attention is given to the concept of principle over person, while this is reversed from the journal's middle years and the stress is increasingly placed on the actual manifestation of a personal antichrist. It is difficult to know if differing statements represent disagreement between members of the Circle or evolution of thought on the subject. For Antichrist understood in terms of anti-Christian principle see *TMW* I:288.6, I:538.1-5, II:480.9, II:622.8, V:11.7, VI:330.7, VI:332.2. For Antichrist understood as personification see I:288.9, II:481.2, II:485.9, III:314.2, IV:63.2, V:11.5-9, V:263.3, VII:1.9, VII:390.6. Something of the ambiguity that exists through *The Morning Watch* may be seen in the following quotation: "An intimate acquaintance with the word of God would teach us to expect no despot, but the most cruel of all despots, a lawless mob. If some autocrat, however, should arise, we shall have no difficulty proclaiming him the personal Antichrist, which the primitive church always anticipated would appear" (*TMW* III: 206.3). The Antichrist has long been a convenient, if overused, identification. Perhaps the lack of specific referent is compensated for by the benefit of having one's options kept open.

<sup>47</sup> *TMW* I:539.6—December 1829. See also *TMW* I:288.6. The term "earthquake" usually referred to "political commotion" and here foresees the fall of governments to democracy ("mob rule") and the fall of traditional political as well as social and economic structures. These are never separated from spiritual and ecclesial issues. A mob seeking democratic reform was ultimately viewed in spiritual (and premillennial adventist) terms, as rebellion against God's chosen authority structure: "There cannot be an act of more willful rebellion of spirit against God, than to propagate the doctrine that princes derive their power from the people" (*TMW* I:506.4—September 1829).

<sup>48</sup> *TMW* I:538.1 Edward Irving gives an early statement of Albury's understanding of the Anti-Christian apostasy in "On the Doctrine and Manifestation and Character of the Apostasy in the Church," *TMW* I:100-115. The anti-Christian principle proved quite adaptable and was applied to any one of a number of enemies as Oliver helpfully notes: "the Albury Circle . . . found no difficulty in compressing both popery and democracy into the figure of Antichrist; in the Great Britain of Daniel O'Connell and Catholic Emancipation this was a plausible opinion" Oliver, *Prophets and Millennialists*, p. 42.

festation, what lay hidden behind. Thus Albury looked to history to discern this principle and history, again, to see it manifested. Events in France were interpreted as the beginning of the end of the papacy and the release of the spirit of antichrist into the world. Here “infidelity first shewed its open front, and gave demonstration of its tremendous character.”<sup>49</sup> But this does not mean that the Spirit of Antichrist was new or only then coming into influence. Rather, the fall of Catholicism in France was interpreted as a long withheld judgment of the very spirit that had ever dwelt within and controlled the papacy. This judgment—and thus destruction—of Catholicism released this antichristian spirit into the world where it would briefly flourish before being destroyed by God at the coming of the millennial kingdom. In this time, Christendom would face its most crucial test: would it discern the true source behind the spirit of the age and reject it, or reveal that it, like Catholicism in France had ever and only been under its control?

From Albury’s perspective, the French Revolution, and the desolation in its wake, evoked a truly apocalyptic scene. In the words of John Tudor:

This is that spirit of infidelity which, gaining the upper hand in France May 1793, abolished public worship; declared the Scriptures to be a fable; treated them with the utmost contempt; changed weeks for decades; substituted the year of the republic for the Christian era; and did, as far as the influence of infidelity extended, overcome and kill these two witnesses, by suppressing their prophesying in which alone their life and power consisted.<sup>50</sup>

France had turned from the Bible, treating it as “a fable.” Critical study had been allowed to “overcome and kill” the Scriptural witness, which Albury found evidenced primarily in the church’s ignorance and denial of the Bible’s prophetic character. The end of the Christian era had begun, and in its place had risen a new perspective that exchanged proper authority with mob democracy, knowledge of truth for scientific nominalism, and godliness for a spirit of infidelity. The characteristics of this perfidy, barely

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<sup>49</sup> *TMW* I:539.8—December 1829. “On the Gradual Unfolding of Prophecy.” Anonymous.

<sup>50</sup> *TMW* I:563.3—December 1829. “On the Interpretation of the Apocalypse,” I:543-577. John Tudor. Tudor identifies these two witnesses as the Old and New Testaments drawing on the imagery Rev. 11:3-12. Two years later pseudonymous “Fidus” states: “The two witnesses in the Apocalypse, or the two ‘sons of oil’ in Zecharia, represent just the complete testimony to the truth; as Jannes and Jambres represent the complete testimony for the lie” (*TMW* IV:260.8—December 1831). While the details between the two differ, the allegorical interpretation common to both has removed their ultimate meaning from historic materialism to typological idealism.

under the surface in any age, had “exploded at the French Revolution” as a warning of those tremendous convulsions of which France was only the start.

This second earthquake, the spread of this spirit across Europe, was perceived by the Circle as well advanced by the first issue of *The Morning Watch*.<sup>51</sup> Having discerned the essential nature of the anti-Christian spirit, Albury identified it as the real source and power behind much of what had clandestinely occurred in Europe over the previous century. The modern age and “the principles in which the infidel Antichrist shall find his strength” had found “patronage in Frederic of Prussia and his witlings” and the “Encyclopedists” of Enlightenment France.<sup>52</sup> Protestant Germany, where “the authority of the Apocalypse has been questioned by many”<sup>53</sup> had welcomed the spirit of the age and fallen from faith to apostasy. Other nations, too, had accepted the anti-Christian principles of the French Revolution and their “revolutions” would be evaluated in latter issues of the journal. With the dissemination of this apostasy, God’s judgment had begun to fall like rain across Europe, touching “every papal kingdom of Europe, and most of the Protestant kingdoms also—all indeed, except our own—smitten with signal judgments on their capital cities and royal lines.”<sup>54</sup> Britain, Edward Irving wrote, had “received many warnings in our pecuniary affairs, yet have we as yet received no heavy chastisement in the high places of our pride; and for some such I look, before we shall be totally overthrown.”<sup>55</sup> “Although England was preserved through the first shock of the earth-

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<sup>51</sup> *TMW* II:38.9—March 1830. See also *TMW* IV:322.4—December 1831.

<sup>52</sup> *TMW* I:538.5—December 1829. “On the Gradual Unfolding of Prophecy.” Frederick II of Prussia (1712-86), was of the most noble of the Enlightenment’s despots. The Encyclopedists refer to Denis Diderot (1713-84) and the talented enlightenment thinkers he enlisted to produce his lifework, the *Encyclopédie*. The Journal’s contributors show little interest in America, which is occasionally denounced for its “mob rule.” Russia too is barely mentioned save in connection to prophetic expectations.

<sup>53</sup> *TMW* I:275.7, 9—September 1829. “On the Apocalypse and the Millennium,” pp. 1:273-91. John Tudor. It is important to note the centrality of prophecy studies. Whatever else in Scripture one may deny, question, or explain, doubting its prophetic nature was alone enough to cast doubt on one’s commitment to Scripture and sincerity of faith.

<sup>54</sup> *TMW* I:321.8—September 1829. “Interpretation of All the Old Testament Prophecies Quoted in the New,” pp. 1:315-350. Edward Irving. This interpretive endeavour of Irving’s was massive. In the first three years he submitted twelve installments under this title filling approximately 369 pages. The last of these appears in December 1831. Irving gives no reason for turning from his intended goal suggested by the word “All.” From the content of *The Morning Watch* it appears likely that his attention turned instead to interpreting the Pentecostal manifestations then occurring at Regent Square and defending himself against the increasing virulent and threatening charges of heresy.

<sup>55</sup> *TMW* I:321.8—September 1829.

quake of 1789, the seeds of disorder were sown, which, unless timely rooted up, were sure to bring forth evil fruit in due season."<sup>56</sup> There was hope on the edge of cataclysm, a chance of rescue from under the vial of God's wrath. Irving held that there was a judgment leading to repentance that, if grasped by a repentant nation, would deliver Britain from going the way of Papal Europe and destine it for special role at the end of the age. The burden was upon the church in hope that her faithfulness and witness might save the nation.

*b) Christendom Seeped in the Spirit of Antichrist*

"The immediate and proximate cause which  
brings down the wrath of God  
is the faithlessness of the professing church."  
John Tudor<sup>57</sup>

The Albury Circle's perception of the church was a mixture of hope filled optimism and caustic pessimism. Pessimism because they saw the church as profoundly fallen from its calling, secularized and grievously unspiritual, and consequently in desperate need of revival. Optimism because they believed such revival was possible and indeed God's will and work in their day. In these early years, in spite of the heat of their rhetoric and the condemnations exchanged increasingly between the Circle and almost every branch of Christianity in Britain, one perceives Circle believed the church—and thus the nation—could be saved. Even more, they held God had raised up the study of prophecy, the men of the *Watch*, and their journal for just this purpose. Theirs was a special day of mercy, a time of peerless opportunity, and through their first years, they held every hope that the fruit of their labours would prepare and define the church for a millennium. With the passion of prophets and energy of reformers, the Albury Circle set

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<sup>56</sup> III:200.2—March 1831. "Progress of Judgments on England and Holland." Anonymous. The "seeds of disorder" in context refer to growing democracy movements. The article strongly denounces the right of people to establish their own government and upholds the Divine right of Kings. Irving held there were two ways a nation may fall: "either the people should burst asunder the natural bands of reverence and obedience to their superiors to the learned and governing class, as they are now hasting to do in this island, or did some forty years ago in France. . . or that they should retain their respect and reverence for their instructors and governors, and so be led astray into all error with respect to God, and perish along with those who mislead them" (*TMW* I:323.5—September 1829). Irving later states the former of these is the more common and awful in "these latter days."

<sup>57</sup> *TMW* II:487.2—March 1830. "On the Antichrist, Its Nature and Time." John Tudor.

*-Chapter Three-*  
Prophecy, Revelation, and Revival

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themselves to reverse the spiritual decline of the nation, check the influence of the French Revolution, and prepare the Bride of Christ for the coming of her Lord and Bridegroom, and their thousand year reign with him on earth.

James Haldane Stewart, attendee of at least one of the Albury Conferences and the author of *Practical View of the Redeemer's Advent*,<sup>58</sup> saw the signs of the coming advent in generally more positive terms than his colleagues. Like them, he conjectured the decline of the Turkish Empire and the benevolence toward the Jews were indications of an imminent advent. But, unlike others around the table, Stewart found the most sure sign of the coming millennial kingdom in the global propagation of the gospel, noting favourably that forty-one societies were spending £400,000 annually to spread the message in 141 languages.<sup>59</sup> This reflects a reckoning closer to Evangelical hearts and is perhaps one reason why the *Christian Observer* would frequently commend Stewart to their readers for providing a sober and balanced approach to the prophecies, free of speculative delusions and apocalyptic gloom.<sup>60</sup>

Contrary to Albury's perception, Evangelicals neither denied nor ignored prophecy. On the contrary, they, like most during the prophetic revival of the 1820s, saw prophecy as providing an essential part of the church's message. *The Christian Observer* encouraged the study of prophecy during this period, on the premise that such reflection instilled an awareness of God's sovereignty, not only over individual lives, but churches and nations. Even more, many of their reasons for this were in full agreement with those of Albury. Both saw prophecy as a means of confirming the veracity of the Scriptures through the verification of explicit prophetic fulfillment. Both saw revelation as occurring in the intertwining of biblical prediction and later fulfillment. And both saw prophecy as indispensable in bringing renewal to the church and shaping the morals and behaviour of society. Yet these similarities must not be allowed to hide profound differ-

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<sup>58</sup> London, 1825.

<sup>59</sup> Oliver, *Prophets and Millennialists*, p. 71.

<sup>60</sup> Oliver, *Prophets and Millennialists*, notes of Stewart: "For all his acceptance of a fairly imminent end, he deflected millennial yearning into individual and practical channels. He would be more likely to prompt an increased subscription to a missionary society than a restless desire for a new earth" (p. 71).

ences in perspective, use, and goal of prophecy between the Albury Circle and the Evangelicals.

The polemic had begun with the Albury Circle, who apparently saw it as an inevitable function of their role as prophets of the millennium.<sup>61</sup> In any case, the journal castigated almost every aspect and element of the larger Christian world. Usually these were simply stated in antithesis to their own theology. Frequently they occurred as direct rebuke as sermons, books, and theological positions were weighed in the balance of prophetic truth and found wanting. But cumulatively, through literally hundreds of pages of *The Morning Watch*, the larger church, particularly its Evangelical wing, was subjected to blistering and unrelenting criticism. The response of the larger church, begun cautiously and with some uncertainty, also took a variety of forms. These initially were little more than casual criticisms of Albury in sermons, theological journals and even the secular press.<sup>62</sup> But by their fourth issue the Circle was responding to full-blown criticism as the church, especially Evangelicals, turned to battle. While detail and content varied, their broadsides were directed primarily toward two targets: Albury's premillennial theology and Edward Irving's Christology in which he allegedly held to the sinfulness of Christ. By the end of the year a third target was found in Albury's interest in the Spirit's gifts of power.

In 1830, *The Record*, an Evangelical periodical, accused the contributors to *The Morning Watch* of losing their Christian love in their zeal for prophecy. Albury's response was blunt: "We tell the editors of the *Record* plainly, and in all love, that unless

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<sup>61</sup> "There is one other cause still for the low state of theology prevalent amongst us: and that is, the absence of controversy, and the distaste of controversial writing" (TMW 1:720.6—December 1829).

<sup>62</sup> Perhaps most illuminating are *A Collection of Extracts from Various Periodicals, relating to Edward Irving, 1831-65* (British Library cat. 764.h.12.) and *A Collection of Newspaper Cuttings relating to Edward Irving, 1825-35* (British Library cat. 764.h.8(7.)). See also William Cuninghame, *The Scheme of Prophetic Arrangement of the Rev. Edward Irving and Mr. Frere Critically Examined; with Some Remarks on the Present Aspect of Affairs in Reference to the Fulfilment of Prophecy* (London: Thomas Cadell, etc., 1826). Henry Cole, *A Letter to the Rev. Edward Irving ... in refutation of the awful doctrines, held by him, of the sinfulness, mortality, and corruptibility of the body of Jesus Christ* (London, 1827). W. H. Colyer, *Animadversions on that Pestilent Heresy, the Sinfulness of the Human Nature of the Lord Jesus Christ; as promulgated by the Rev. Edward Irving ... With notes* (London: Westley & Davis, 1830?). Robert Harkness Came, *Review of the Discussion on the Origination of the Manhood of the Son of God, occasioned by statements of Edward Irving, and the Morning Watch on that subject; with supplemental remarks, relative to the botanico-anatomico-theological essay on the same topic by Thomas William Chevalier ... and concluded by an enquiry into the nature and immediate cause of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ* (London: Ebenezer Palmer, 1832).



they are much on their guard, they are on the point of avowing themselves 'no brethren' at all, but rank heretics; in danger of losing their own souls, and destroying the souls of others. The character of their journal has ever been little, petty, and mean."<sup>63</sup> But the full truth of the *Record's* criticism and Albury's maledictions is more complex. To Irving and his Circle their prophetic zeal and even vitriolic were understood as the fruit of their love, a love for the truth as they understood it and a love for the church to which they were zealously committed. Albury's hermeneutic had led them to conclude that prophecy was *the* content and message of the Bible and to turn from its proclamation and dissemination was "to fall among the students of his false holiness, the Pope; and all those who would shut up the Bible altogether."<sup>64</sup>

The contributors of *The Morning Watch* were well aware of the dangers of prophecy studies and their efforts were a bold attempt to sail between what they perceived were the Scylla and Charybdis of their day. "The coming of the Lord in glory has acquired a relative interest, maintained and magnified by the discordant opinions and statements which are daily reiterated in all the churches." This writer goes on to explain how "diametrically opposed" are these opinions and thus "either the one party is deluded by the most visionary enthusiasms, or the other is sunk into a deceitful infidelity; glorying in its own shame under the pleasing title of spirituality. . . . Either there is Anti-christian imagination at work on the one side, perverting the Scriptures; or there is Anti-christian scepticism at work on the other side, explaining away the Scriptures."<sup>65</sup> But Irving and the Circle were confident that their system was different. Theirs was an objective method of interpretation built upon strict rules and doctrinal unity. Their message bore the weight of ancient truth and fresh revelation conjoined to awaken a distracted and faithless church to the heart and goal of its gospel. And if the promulgation of the premillennial message was met with consternation and rebuke, this was only to be expected. Irving held the church had always had false prophets leading her astray and these

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<sup>63</sup> *TMW* II:921.7—December 1830. Both sides used the same ammunition: "We are utterly at a loss to discover evidence of the existence of Christian love in any quarter of the religious world" (IV:124.7—September 1831). The writer states that non-Christians show more love than Evangelicals and one would be more likely to find examples of it in the inquisition than the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

<sup>64</sup> *TMW* I:400.3—September 1829. R. Baxter.

<sup>65</sup> *TMW* II:34.6—March 1830. Cf. *TMW* I:285.

*-Chapter Three-*  
**Prophecy, Revelation, and Revival**

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should only be expected to abound in the time of the end.<sup>66</sup> Criticism and conflict were a necessary and inevitable element of proclaiming God's truth in a sin filled world. Their own age was rapidly approaching the nadir of its undying hostility towards God and the only hope, for church and world, lay in the witness of the prophetic word. The Albury Circle turned to face the storm and once more courageously raised its voice against the ranks of godlessness, regardless of source or cost.

But criticism was not all they expected. The Albury Prophets, believing their message was one of unprecedented power, authority, and urgency, looked with eager anticipation for the fulfillment of all things. The Albury Circle believed themselves destined to succeed and cited evidences that their labour was not in vain. "Within the last two months men's eyes have become wonderfully opened: the journals which had been foremost in ridiculing the 'novelties' and 'new doctrines' of the prophets, are now themselves recommending a 'judicious study of the prophetic parts of Scripture: and have had the reluctant confession exhorted from them, that all wisdom on these subjects was not hid with themselves.'<sup>67</sup> Additionally, the Circle fully expected their own vindication would rise ultimately and imminently from the ashes of war. Theirs was a battle to be won, not without cost or strife, yet nevertheless. And if the world would not turn *en masse* to God, it was fully expected that a significant part might. In this would come vindication, not only of God and his Word, but also of those who faithfully and tirelessly endeavoured to voice its proclamation. In prophecy alone lay not only the hope of the world, but their own vindication and reward, given by Christ in his millennial kingdom before the eyes of all who thought them mad.

While the larger church—both Dissenting and Established—would see their faults exposed by Albury, it was the Evangelicals, they held, that presented the most

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<sup>66</sup> *TMW* I:578.8—December 1829.

<sup>67</sup> II:942.1—December 1830. "On the Good and Evil of Religious Societies." A. P. This statement reflects some truth commingled with hopeful expectation. *The Christian Observer* made its first mention of the millennial revival in July of 1825, (*Christian Observer*, 24 [1825], pp. 427ff., 489ff.) giving the appearance of confused and irritable outsiders. Within two years the journal had gained an apocalyptic expertise, adeptly reviewing millennial perspectives and publishing dozens of articles on millennial themes. But by the end of 1830 their interest in prophecy had begun to wane and was turned toward such other issues as controversies surrounding the Bible Societies and struggles of disestablishment.

dangerously errant ministry.<sup>68</sup> If the established churches were doing nothing to further the millennial kingdom, the Evangelicals were criticized for actually fighting against it. At issue were profoundly differing worldviews. While the men of the *Watch* saw the world through premillennial apocalypticism, the Evangelical church operated from within a postmillennial optimism inherited from the previous century.<sup>69</sup> The Kingdom of God was theirs to proclaim, exhibit, and perhaps even usher in as their labours transformed the world. Their ministries and societies in turn reflected this understanding: preaching emphasized a conversion of heart<sup>70</sup> and mission the conversion of the world, while religious societies provided infrastructure for evangelism, missions, and social reform.<sup>71</sup> In one sense, both Evangelicals and Albury shared a similar optimism, each viewing the times as divinely nonpareil and ripe with potential. But while Evangelicals perceived their day as one on the very banks of the Jordan, mere steps from the inheritance they had been commanded to take, the Watchmen saw their times as teetering on the edge of cataclysm, its only hope in premillennial renovation and a heavenly new Jerusalem.

The men of the Albury Circle were committed to the church and saw themselves as faithful labourers courageously endeavouring to create a renewal of zeal, direction, and depth. It began with the optimism that the church could turn, indeed, would turn if

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<sup>68</sup> Helpful studies include: David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 1995). Francis Knight, *The Nineteenth-Century Church and English Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). Michael Hennell, *Sons of the Prophets: Evangelical Leaders in the Victorian Church* (London: SPCK, 1979). Roger H. Martin, *Evangelicals United: Ecumenical Stirrings in Pre-Victorian Britain, 1795-1830*, Studies in Evangelicalism, No. 4 (London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1983).

<sup>69</sup> Iain Murray suggests optimistic post-millennialism extends at least as far back as the Puritans if not to Calvin himself and holds Edward Irving, the Albury Conferences and *The Morning Watch* were responsible for turning the tide of public opinion. See *The Puritan Hope: A Study in Revival and the Interpretation of Prophecy* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Press, 1975), pp. 194f.

<sup>70</sup> This aspect is not completely absent in *The Morning Watch*: Alexander Scott, writing in "Answer to the Question, What was the Reformation," speaks of the Reformation having birthed both a true spirituality and an unfaithful spirit of individualism which has done grievous harm. With almost conversionist zeal, Scot calls for the church to turn to the truth of the Reformers and the salvation they had separated from Catholicism's "paganism of sensual idolatry" (*TMW* I:629.5) and restored to the church. Nevertheless, it is not a dominant theme in the journal.

<sup>71</sup> To give one example: The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), founded in 1698 to produce "charity schools," disperse Bibles and tracts, and promote Christian knowledge at home and abroad. This society was sharply criticized by *The Morning Watch* as narrow and possessing a "schismatic spirit. . . in the midst of an almost total apathy to the spiritual wants of the people and torpid inactivity to everything but itself" (*TMW* II:933.8).

the prophetic truth were clearly set before it and to this singular aim the men of the *Watch* dedicated themselves. But revival must not be misunderstood. For their focus lay not in the change of the individual heart but in preparing the larger church and nation for the cataclysm that was all but upon it. The Albury Circle had little interest in revival as commonly understood and held in disdain Evangelicalism's affectional and experiential emphases. Similarly, they were extremely skeptical of the effectiveness of Evangelical preaching<sup>72</sup> and suspected such experiences of personal crisis, decision, and surrender to God, where testified to, were merely evidence of people hearing what they wanted to hear.<sup>73</sup> "Let their accounts of revivals, be as numerous as they please," remarked one reviewer, "we may feel assured that the appearances are hollow and false."<sup>74</sup> Indeed, Evangelical preaching, they concluded was actually a sign and proof "that religion must be declining"<sup>75</sup> as the majority of preachers, afraid of offending those with wealth or power,<sup>76</sup> rendered contemporary preaching anemic, empty, and simple. Irving and his circle sought a revival less subjective, emotional, and inward, shaped instead by objective historic and biblical realities, and made imminently necessary because of them.

It was not for revival of the heart, but preparation for the end, that Edward Irving and the Albury Circle had set as its course. "We are now on the eve of a crisis incomparably the most important that the world has yet passed through," wrote Tudor,<sup>77</sup> a fact which gave the journal both its passion and mission. Their task was two sided: First, the global extent of the coming events turned their focus from the merely personal or ecclesial to the national. Britain—understood as uniquely Christian and faithfully

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<sup>72</sup> "... scarcely any man of ordinary capacity is converted by our Evangelical preachers" (*TMW* I:716.8—December 1829). See also I:341.7; II:182.3

<sup>73</sup> The problem was cyclical: "The great cause of there being such a large supply of shallow sermons is, that there is a great demand for them." This, too, was seen as a sign of the end; cf. II Tim. 4:3.

<sup>74</sup> *TMW* I:712.5—December 1829. These pages are found in an article entitled *Vaughans Popular Essays* (I:691-722) under the heading "Reviews and Miscellanies." While the anonymous author's intent appears to have been the review of essays by E. T. Vaughan, Vicar of St. Martins in Leicester, little actual attention is given toward that end. Instead, it contains a harsh attack on the way sermons were being done throughout the land, with illustrations drawn from the Evangelical church. In typical biting sarcasm, the sermons of one Rev. Andrew Thomson (D. D., Minister of St. George's Church, Edinburgh) are commended as excellent examples of a worthless genre that requires no education to comprehend.

<sup>75</sup> *TMW* I:712.5—December 1829.

<sup>76</sup> See *TMW* I:711f—December 1829.

Protestant—was destined to be a focal point of Divine activity. Yet, for all the national and international dimensions, the Albury Circle maintained an ecclesial interest. For it was to the church the Lord would first return. It was upon the church that the first and harshest judgments would fall. And thus it was the church, even more than nation or culture, that received the emphasis of Albury's attention, as their every resource and energy was turned to preparing the Bride for her coming Bridegroom. The contributors to *The Morning Watch* sought to decisively demonstrate to an unspiritual and changing age that God's will and work lay behind every event, every movement, and every life, moving them all towards his ultimate goal. Without this understanding of the spiritual realities behind both events and progress of history, the church could have neither faith nor God and was destined to face destruction with the entire world as it fell to the spirit of the age unleashed in the French Revolution.

*The Morning Watch's* revivalistic perspective and intentions were immovably centered on the last days and from this perspective alone the larger church was evaluated. The Circle criticized the "Evangelical sect" for allowing its naïve optimism to blind them to the impotence and arrogance of their labours. Referring to Evangelical post-millennialists, Irving wrote: "They speak of the world as winding on its way to a happy Millennium; we preach a world ready to be destroyed by the wrath of God."<sup>78</sup> Likened by Irving to Pharisees who boast in their alms giving, Evangelicals were criticized for their failure to recognize that their best efforts were only doomed to fail.<sup>79</sup> Irving passionately lamented:

Oh, it is a cruel system, a most cruel, hateful system of pharisaical pretense, which is working over this land. We talk of our charities and alms-deeds: they are as a drop of that bucket which is filled with the sweat and tears of an over-wrought and miserable

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<sup>77</sup> *TMW* I:185.6—June 1829. John Tudor, "The Study of Prophecy a Question of Degree."

<sup>78</sup> *TMW* II:553.7—September 1830. See also *TMW* I:247 where the author shows the primary difference between their own view and that of most "periodical journals of the present day" is that of optimistic post-millennialism (or amillennialism) verses apocalyptic premillennialism. See also IV:369.6; V:70.9, V:128. On Evangelicalism's failure to discern the times see: I:116.5.

<sup>79</sup> Through the early years of *The Morning Watch*, Evangelicals are commonly referred to as Pharisees. Irving: "It is generally thought that this character of the Pharisee applieth chiefly, or exclusively, to the formalists of the church; and not to the evangelicals, as they are called, to whom I maintain that it specially refereth." (I:662.7. See also: I:650f; II:149.2, 547.6; III:223.7).

-Chapter Three-  
Prophecy, Revelation, and Revival

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people. . . . Woe unto such a system! Woe unto the men of this land who have been brought under its operation.<sup>80</sup>

For the Watchmen, no greater example of Evangelicalism's folly could be found than their efforts to convert Jews and Catholics. Seen by Evangelicals as an integral part of the Gospel mandate, such efforts were interpreted by Albury through their premillennial hermeneutic and deemed antithetical to will of God.

The Papal apostasy is not to be converted by preaching at all, but to be destroyed, by violence, war, and bloodshed: that the Jews, as a nation, are not to be converted until *after* the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ: that at his advent the elect, both Jews and Gentiles, will be caught up to meet him in the air: and that at that period, instead of the world being better than at any preceding period, it will be worse; and that the worst characteristics of it will be found among those 'having a form of godliness;' which expression they hold synonymous with the modern phrase, 'the religious world.'<sup>81</sup>

Albury's chronology of the last days had determined that the Jews had not yet come to the time when they would hear the Gospel, repent of their previous rejection of Christ as Saviour and turn in mass conversion to become, again, the people of God on Earth.<sup>82</sup> And Catholicism, the antichrist prophesied of old, had been destined for destruction not salvation. "But all churches, that have put forth any form of doctrine, have agreed in this, that to destroy Antichrist is Christ to come. The conversion of the Papacy is a dream of Evangelical Liberality; and so is spiritual advent, that precious absurdity of the same learned school."<sup>83</sup> It was this perceived liberalism that stirred the ire of those contributing to *The Morning Watch*. "The Evangelical Clergymen, who have been for many years the principal writers in *The Christian Observer*, have become so deeply imbued with Liberalism, which is but a modified Infidelity, that they have leaned much more to the infidel than to the High-Church party in the country."<sup>84</sup> Thomas Arnold is criticized for what *The Morning Watch* feels was a rejection of ultimate truth by his support of the Catholic Relief Act and then identified with "Evangelical Prelates who patronize and circulate his opinions." While the principles of "equal rights" are

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<sup>80</sup> *TMW* I:666.1—December 1829. "Signs of the Times, And the Characteristics of the Church." Edward Irving.

<sup>81</sup> II:183.6—March 1830. "On Charges Against *The Morning Watch*, for not Preaching Christ, and Him Crucified..." Anonymous.

<sup>82</sup> See *TMW* I:38.5, 72-75, 157.3, 247.9; II:311.8; III:102.3, 105.7, 311.2 *et al.*

<sup>83</sup> I:607.6—December 1829. "Interpretation of all the Old Testament Prophecies Quoted in the New." Edward Irving.

argued “very successfully” by Arnold, they “have nothing to do with Christianity; that they are the very same which are discussed by Plato, Tully, and Plutarch; and that therefore they are not *higher principles* upon the same level, and no higher, than those which are to be found in every radical club in the kingdom, in Jerry Bentham and in the *Westminster Review*.”<sup>85</sup> To the men of the *Watch*, Arnold and the “liberal” Evangelicalism conjoined to him, embodied the very anti-Christian principles unleashed in the French Revolution. The principles of the age were drawing Protestant Britain ever closer to the full acceptance of Catholicism, capitalism, and democratic principles and were thus a sign and part of the problem, not its solution. Evangelical attempts to seek the conversion of either Jew or Catholic was indicative of their, liberal naïveté, arrogant confidence, parochial interests, and striving against, rather than for, the Kingdom of God.

All these errors had their source in Evangelicalism’s ignorance and denial of prophecy. One article, entitled “On the ‘Meat in Due Season,’” states, “It is the constant preaching and the continual hearing of the same thing over and over and over again, which has brought the church into its present sickly state, so that it cannot be fed with *meat*, but only with milk: and, lying in this helpless, weak condition, it will eventually fall a prey to those enemies by whom it is perpetually assaulted.”<sup>86</sup> The words “in season” refer to doctrine relevant and specific for its age. “Meat” symbolizes, not the elemental teachings of the Bible or church (the cross, is referred to as “milk”), but a hidden wisdom revealed by the Spirit and appropriate for the time.<sup>87</sup> Thus, real “meat in season” is to “prepare the household for ‘the great and terrible day of the Lord.’” The article equates the unwise servant of the parable with preachers who, having decided their master’s coming is delayed, turn from the Divine mandate to persecute those under their stewardship. The entire parable was understood by the author as prophetic, its words foreseeing the very malevolence prophecy expositors had suffered at the hands of the larger church. Evangelicals, the article concludes, had utterly failed the preaching office of their day, not only ignoring the “meat in season,” but also actively condemning those

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<sup>84</sup> *TMW* IV:235.9f—September 1831.

<sup>85</sup> *TMW* I:498.5—September 1829.

<sup>86</sup> *TMW* IV:368.4-December 1831. “On the ‘Meat in Due Seasons.’” P. L. The article interprets Matthew 24:45.

*-Chapter Three-*  
**Prophecy, Revelation, and Revival**

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who endeavoured to give the church the Word appropriate for their time. Their “spiritualizing” the prophetic word revealed a mendacious and puerile faith and rendered them, in the judgment of Edward Irving, modern Pharisees who prevented people from entering the kingdom by denying them access to the prophetic witness.<sup>88</sup> Having begun with the premise of an imminent premillennial advent, and viewing this as the primary message of Scripture, Albury proceeded to evaluate all of Christendom by how well it had accepted and reflected this reality.

To these indictments were added numerous other sins and failings, yet all bound to the premillennial worldview. Spiritual qualities of the church had been lost, being replaced by religious activity that built chapels, printed Bibles, collected funds for charities,<sup>89</sup> and sent missionaries across the globe while thoroughly ignoring deeper spiritual realities which rendered such activity powerless.<sup>90</sup> Evangelicals were characterized by greed and covetousness,<sup>91</sup> in competition with the rest of the church,<sup>92</sup> and sectarian.<sup>93</sup> They, like the established churches, were spiritual hypocrites, oblivious to the real nature of God’s kingdom and propagating, instead, the very spirit of the age the church had been called to tear down. Amazingly, Edward Irving cites the church’s lack of spiritual

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<sup>87</sup> *TMW* IV:367.7-December 1831.

<sup>88</sup> *TMW* I:646.1—December 1829. “Signs of the Times, And the Characteristics of the Church,” I:641-666. Edward Irving. See also: II:411.1, 416.9, 838.9, 841.4. Frequent mention is made in the journal to weak faith or ignorance of the Scriptures which are almost always understood as the refusal to believe or act in accord with Biblical prophecy. Albury’s rebuke of the church for its rejection of the prophetic Scriptures is a recurring theme through the entire journal and occurs frequently in a variety of contexts. For examples, see especially: “On the Duty of Studying Unfulfilled Prophecy, I: 45-49; and also I:35f, 114.9, 116.5, 542.7, 626.1; II:83.6, 659.5, 757.9, 784.9; III:8.3, 211.9f, 306.2; IV:253.6, V:127.5, VI:9.6, 159f; VII:34.2, 250.5, 256.3, 257.2.

<sup>89</sup> *TMW* I:650f.

<sup>90</sup> “You have been spending years of great activity erecting, and improving, and extending a huge machine: do think about the moving power. You have been providing music for the deaf, and pictures for the blind: it is time to apply in spiritual earnestness to Him who can alone open their eyes and unstop their ears” (I:640—December 1829. A. J. Scott).

<sup>91</sup> *TMW* I:648—December 1829.

<sup>92</sup> *TMW* I:126.6—March 1829.

<sup>93</sup> *TMW* I:259.8, 702; IV:210.6



gifts as yet further evidence of the church's apostasy, a point that will rise to a prominence in *The Morning Watch* that even he could not foresee.<sup>94</sup>

The Established and Dissenting churches are also rebuked by the men of Albury. If the Evangelicals were Pharisees intent on building their own party, the larger church was viewed as Sadducees, those who had bought wholesale into the culture and associated themselves with free thinkers and scientists. The "High-Church party" was guilty of enjoying a life of wealth and privilege while oppressing the poor and even their own curates, with all but a few forgetting, "that civil government and ecclesiastical establishments are institutions of God for the well being of man."<sup>95</sup> Calvinists had together fallen with "Wesleyan Methodists," the latter being chastised for allowing feelings to become "too powerful for their judgment," while the emphasis on knowledge in the former had "puffed them up, so that they think they know all of God that is revealed. Besides this, they mistake a knowledge of doctrines for a knowledge of God; and place the seat of religion in the intellect, and not in the affections."<sup>96</sup>

The Albury Circle concluded, "that Christendom was full of infidelity."<sup>97</sup> From the perspective of the prophetic Scriptures this had several practical implications. First, "Infidelity" is easily disguised and "may be found in the temple of God."<sup>98</sup> Regardless of apparent sincerity, fruitful labours, and alleged piety, the dominant character of the church had come to be identified with apostasy. Furthermore, this apostasy, once identi-

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<sup>94</sup> *TMW* I:163.8—June 1829. Irving here states his "conviction which is strongly brought to my own mind, that the church ought to look upon her nakedness of spiritual gifts, as a token of her want of faithfulness, as a punishment of God for her unbelief and unrighteousness; not the original constitution in which she was placed, and in which, if she had trusted in the name of Immanuel, she would have continued till this day."

<sup>95</sup> *TMW* III:200.9—March 1831. "Progress on the Judgments on England and Holland." Anonymous.

<sup>96</sup> *TMW* III:369.4—June 1831. "Calvinism not the Whole of Christianity," pp. 369-83. Anonymous. This article critiques the "five points" as "a miserable fraction of Christian doctrine" and is most troubled with any concept of limited atonement (376.7f). Using Noah, whose faith is understood to be literally in Christ, the author holds that the work of Christ was "a ransom for the whole world," at least for all born since the flood, and thus atonement should be understood as universal. The article laments the narrow faith of Calvinists who limit their understanding to the five points and believe salvation comes through acceptance of the doctrine of justification by faith, thereby missing the striving and rigour of the Christian life toward holiness.

<sup>97</sup> *TMW* I:247.6.

<sup>98</sup> *TMW* I: 1:619f—December 1829.

fied strictly with Rome, had now expanded to include fallen Protestantism, the two being ever more closely linked. "It would scarcely be credited, by those who have not made the comparison, how close a resemblance there is between the statements of doctrine in the published sermons of the Evangelical clergy, and those of the Church of Rome."<sup>99</sup> Second, hidden within this larger apostate body was a faithful remnant of true believers, marked primarily by their understanding of the last days and faith in the prophetic Word. Third, the witness and labour of this faithful remnant will illicit persecution not primarily from those outside the church but those who were false within it.<sup>100</sup> And finally, judgment upon this apostate body was inevitable and imminent:

I stand in awe of God's judgment; and the more because I perceive that the very thought of a sin-visiting God is departed from the governors of our nation, and the memory of it is not recalled by those who stand in the room of the prophets,—the ministers of the Word and pastors of the people, who, if they do not teach lies, give place and encouragement to lies by not teaching the truth.<sup>101</sup>

Albury was convinced that the anti-Christian spirit unleashed in the French Revolution had not only cast its shadow on the nation but had pulled the larger church

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<sup>99</sup> *TMW* I:720.2—December 1829, anonymous. No specific details are given though the writer says examples abound. And again: "We believe that it would not be difficult, article by article to shew that a greater semblance of truth is preserved by the Papacy, detestable apostasy though it be, than by the system called Evangelicalism" (II:919.8—December 1830, anonymous). See also II:952.2 where the Church of Scotland is equated to "the Church of Rome."

<sup>100</sup> *TMW* I:115—In summarizing the article "On the Antichristian Apostasy," Irving states that persecution of the faithful will come not from unbelievers outside the church but false brethren within it. This is a common theme in the journal and appears not infrequently in church history. Even the passionate churchman St. Bernard, held the last days would see many clergy, still within the church, numbered among the legions of Antichrist (Cohn, *Pursuit of the Millennium*, p. 80f).

<sup>101</sup> *TMW* I:325.5—September 1829, Edward Irving. On the coming judgment see also *TMW* I:48.5, 288.3, 325.5, 575.5; II:90.2, 158.3, 160.5, 653.3.

*-Chapter Three-*  
**Prophecy, Revelation, and Revival**

---

into its influence. The church, through its indifference, ignorance, and denial of the prophetic Scriptures, had made itself the enemy of God. Even now the seventh vial of God's wrath was poised to be poured out upon the apostasy of the church and it remained only for the faithful, hidden within a faithless and persecuting church, to proclaim the truth of their situation and snatch, as brands from the burning, all who would turn.

# Chapter Four

## Doctrine Through the Premillennial Forge

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### 1. The Transforming Engine of Hermeneutics

**"The revealed will of God forms a complete system of Divine truth. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, comprising the whole of this revelation, are not to be regarded merely as so many detached and independent books, but must be received as all combining to the formation of one grand consistent whole. Throughout, they manifest a unity of design, to which all parts are sub-ordinated."**

**J. A. Begg<sup>1</sup>**

By 1830 the hermeneutic of *The Morning Watch* had bred a full and complex system able to explain any event in terms of its biblical type and any passage in terms of its prophetic content. By its second year of publication, the journal's interpretive theory had, through additional reflection, polemic, and pastoral use, evolved into a holistic economy that not only permitted the synchronizing of historic event with biblical prophecy, but allowed both to be brought under the aegis of a single doctrinal system. The brilliance of their hermeneutic and its corresponding doctrine was this all-embracing character. It was also its Achilles' heel. The message of the Bible, the content of the Christian faith, and indeed, every aspect and element of life was identified and (re-)defined wholly from the perspective of the premillennial system. This new revelatory center led to the transformation of both doctrine and Scripture as they were pressed through the premillennial forge. This produced two effects: first, certain doctrines were transformed while others were created to meet prophetic expectations or systematic demand; second, inherent contradictions arose between traditional—and more orthodox—perspectives and premillennial dogma. Usually more traditional interpretations paled before revelations of last days' events and saw little integration within, or influence upon, the premillennial system and Albury's more orthodox positions—one might in-

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<sup>1</sup> *TMW* II:329.2. June 1830.

-Chapter Four-  
Doctrine Through the Premillennial Forge

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clude especially elements of Irving's Christology—were never allowed to gain precedence over the premillennial system. With this came a transformation of the very meaning of the Christian faith. The dynamic relational encounter through which God speaks, acts, reveals, and thus saves had become replaced by a system inseparably bound to particular interpretation of the Bible and centered on the explication of specific propositional truths, extrinsic and intrinsic.

The Albury Circle's premillennial worldview and hermeneutical system led inevitably to the creation of a different doctrinal system, separated from its necessary Christological center, and thus altered in its very essence, from communal and relational to noetic and propositional. This led the Circle to interpretations that were increasingly complex and all encompassing even as they drifted further into subjectivism. In evaluating the hermeneutic of *The Morning Watch* four overlapping criticisms stand out. First, its concept of historical revelation seeks to establish Christian doctrine in analogy to doctrine as generally understood, fostering a propositional or ethical character but denying the pistis as biblically understood.<sup>2</sup> Second, the historicist hermeneutic denies revelation a center, creating a vacuum inevitably filled by a subjectivism taking a variety of forms. Third, this resulting subjectivism provided for a multiplicity of other words, claiming equal standing to the one Word, and potentially, if not inevitably, overwhelming it. Finally, while historicism may allow for the development of a Christian worldview which has the aura of orthodoxy, it exists as the positing of a human proposition independent of a Christological center which ultimately dispossess Christ as God's Word of Revelation and relational object of faith.

It was never Albury's intention to create doctrine. "It is certainly proper, in our use of such types, to guard against their abuse. . . . Their safest use appears now to be for the illustration and confirmation of particular truths of doctrines otherwise set forth, rather than as sources from whence such truths and doctrines are to be alone deduced."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Something of the proper dynamic may be seen in the biblical narratives themselves: οἱ ποιμένες ἐλάλουν πρὸς ἀλλήλους, Διέλωμεν δὴ ἕως Βηθλέεμ καὶ ἴδωμεν τὸ ῥῆμα τοῦτο τὸ γεγονός· ὁ δὲ κύριος ἐγνώρισεν ἡμῖν (Luke 2:15). Here the word, act, and revelation of God are inseparably bound to one another and are recognized not as mere announcement of fact but relational and thus faith centered rather than propositional centered revelation. This is the norm of Scriptural revelation.

<sup>3</sup> II:100.3—March 1830.

Yet in spite of these intentions, the Circle did not hold to this principle. In fact, it may be argued, to do so was an inherent contraction. For their specific hermeneutic and understanding of the nature of revelation led inevitably to an ever broadening sources of revelation which had to be brought under the defining system of the larger whole. As the men of the *Watch* identified further correlations between prophetic promise, historical antecedent, and antitypical fulfillment, new insights arose. While these could at first be fit within a relatively traditional understanding, they eventually produced a number of innovations. Albury's premillennial theories, bound to their hermeneutic, became the forge upon which Christian doctrine was reshaped and created.

### *a) Last Days Revelation and the Forging of Doctrine*

#### *(1) Dispensations and a Philosophy of History<sup>4</sup>*

The heart of Albury's philosophy of history is found in its separating of history into distinct dispensations of time—each of which is understood as a unique period of revelation, divine intent, and human responsibility—which were then combined to unveil the Divine intendment. This is, of course, neither new nor unique to Albury. F. E. Manuel describes four basic forms used for centuries to define the shape and movement of history: the triadic, Danielic, sabbatical, and meliorist.<sup>5</sup> The triadic, of Jewish origin, divides history into three phases: the Jews before, under, and after the law or a Pauline view of dispensations before and under the Old Covenant of law and under the New Covenant of Grace. Voegelin<sup>6</sup> theorizes this triadic worldview lies behind the historical philosophies of Comte, Hegel, and Marx, as well as the Third Rome of Russia and the Third Reich of Hitler's National Socialism. The Danielic uses the imagery of Daniel 2 and 7 to divide history into five successive empires. This view is perhaps the most influ-

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<sup>4</sup> It is not my purpose here to correlate or equate Albury's premillennialism with contemporary dispensationalism or to prove the source of the latter is to be found in the former. My intention is simply to demonstrate that Albury's hermeneutic led to a specific systematic theology that I believe is best described as "nascent dispensationalism." The precise relationship between Albury's theology and that which will follow in John Nelson Darby, the Plymouth Brethren, and especially 20<sup>th</sup> century dispensationalism, while remarkable, lie beyond the purview of this thesis.

<sup>5</sup> Frank E. Manuel, *Shapes of Philosophical History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965), pp. 13-23.

<sup>6</sup> Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952, 1987), pp. 110ff.

ential within premillennialism, especially if the Roman identification of the fourth monarchy is allowed to extend to Catholicism and Catholic Europe. The continued existence of “Rome” and the belief that its fall would usher the final age encouraged countless expositors to identify the extent and decay of the Empire and thus their place within the prophetic chronology. The sabbatical model, following the imagery of creation, divided history into seven periods of a thousand years each, the last being a sabbatical rest. Millennialists, in the wake of the French Revolution, combined the Danielic and sabbatical models “and integrated them by imposing arbitrary value upon the vague time-indications in the sources...The task of reconciling the five-period pattern of Daniel with the seven-period pattern of Revelation presented no real difficulty to men determined to do just that.”<sup>7</sup> The fourth view, more prevalent among post-millennial optimists than the Albury Circle, is the meliorist. This view reflects a “Eusibian” optimism, present in any age that sees in the combining of secular and spiritual labours a relentless move toward a mutually beneficial end.

The splitting of history into specific dispensations, during which God uniquely deals with his people, was commonly used across church history. Justin Martyr believed the distinction between Noahic, Abrahamic, and Mosaic periods allowed each to be pleasing to God, though the law was known only to the third of these periods and circumcision only to the latter two.<sup>8</sup> He also described the present age of the church and its gifts of power in terms that distinguished it from Israel.<sup>9</sup> Irenaeus held the reason for only four gospels lay in the intrinsic quadriform shape of the Gospel that in turn reflects the “four principle covenants given the human race.”<sup>10</sup> Augustine, too, describes the cultic sacrifice in terms of distinct dispensations, concluding:

It is now established that that which was for one age rightly ordained may be in another age rightly change—the alteration indicating change in the work, not in the plan, of Him who makes the change, the plan being framed by His reasoning faculty to

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<sup>7</sup> Oliver, *Prophets and Millennialists*, p. 27.

<sup>8</sup> Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, XCII.

<sup>9</sup> Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, LXXXVII.

<sup>10</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, III.xi.8; Irenaeus did not specifically call these dispensations here though elsewhere he speaks of the dispensations of God and especially the dispensation of the church (V.xxviii.3).

*-Chapter Four-*  
**Doctrine Through the Premillennial Forge**

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which, unconditioned by succession in time, those things are simultaneously present which cannot be actually done at the same time because the ages succeed each other.<sup>11</sup>

As mentioned earlier, one of the most influential of medieval apocalypticists was Joachim of Fiore, who introduced a tripartite dispensationalism in which time was broken into three overlapping periods each correlated to one member of the Trinity.

In the more modern period, dispensational structures may be found in Pierre Poirer's (1646-1719) work, *L'Oeconomie Divine* (Amsterdam, 1687). John Edwards (1637-1716) published in 1699 a work entitled *A Compleat History or Survey of all the Dispensations* in which he seeks "to display all the Transactions of Divine Providence relating to the Methods of Religion from the Creation to the end of the World, from the first Chapter of Genesis to the last of the Revelation."<sup>12</sup>

What made Albury's dispensationalism distinct was its basis in the literal-typical hermeneutic and the universal doctrinal economy it produced. There was a division of history based strictly upon an *a priori* understanding of the Bible's inspired nature, its message conveyed through prophetic promise, penultimate type and ultimate aim, a philosophy of history by which word and type were synthesized, and a full dogmatic system by which the nature and work of God was explained within this frame work. While dispensational systems indeed existed across church history, none compare, in breadth and intricacy, to that developed by Albury and disseminated in the pages of *The Morning Watch*.

The Albury Circle divided history into seven dispensations, figurally reflecting the days of creation:

As he created all things in six days, and rested on the seventh, hallowing it, so has he ordained in six successive ages to work out the work of all new creation, and added a seventh age as an eternal one, the age of rest and sanctified glory. These seven ages are, —1. the age before the Fall, or Adam age; 2. The age until the Flood, or Noah age; 3. the age until the deliverance of the church, or Patriarchal age; 4. the age of the Jewish church; 5. the age of the Gentile church; 6. the age of the Millennial church; and 7. the age of the Resurrection church.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Augustine, *To Marcellinus*, CXXXVIII, 5, 7.

<sup>12</sup> John Edwards, *A Compleat History or Survey of all the Dispensations*, (London, 1699).

<sup>13</sup> *TMW* IV:134.9f—September 1831. "Jesus the Head over All Things to His Church." R. B.



*-Chapter Four-*  
**Doctrine Through the Premillennial Forge**

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Each period is seen to correlate to one day of creation and is characterized by a specific revelation of God's will, which in turn called for a response of faith and obedience unique to that dispensation. Richard Baxter, solicitor, member of Irving's Regent Square Church, and one of the first men to manifest the gifts of the Spirit wrote in September, 1829 that God's "mode of revelation of his immediate purposes has been seen to be after one degree and method during the patriarchal dispensation, after another degree or mode during the Jewish dispensation, and in like manner varying during the dispensation of the Gentiles."<sup>14</sup> Additionally, each of these days of Creation, through their prophetic character, produced a specific fulfillment that was in turn figural of a yet greater manifestation.

This had three problems: first, it led, as we have seen, to highly creative analogies as their critics were conveniently identified as latter day Philistines, Edomites, or the Whore of Babylon, as the need required. Second, it maintained a historicist principle of correlation in which every event is understood in terms of typical causality, limiting revelation to the march of historical progress while isolating it from the incarnation and Christology. Third, and most significantly, the conjoining of historicism and subjectivism, led the Circle to see in the progression of history only what their *a priori* expectations required.

## (2) Ecclesiology

The practical effect of this dispensational typology is perhaps nowhere more clearly seen, or influential, than Albury's ecclesiology. The men of the *Watch* stood convinced that Christendom, antitypically manifesting the place and call of Israel, lay under judgment, for its rejection of God's saving work and turn from true faith to papal idolatry. "There is to be a point in the evolution of time when the present Christian dispensation will cease to be what it is."<sup>15</sup> The evidence for this was, derived "first from chronology; secondly from the accomplishment of predictions; thirdly, from the signs of the

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<sup>14</sup> *TMW* I:400.8—September 1829.

<sup>15</sup> *TMW* I:115.6—March 1829.

-Chapter Four-  
Doctrine Through the Premillennial Forge

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times.”<sup>16</sup> Having concluded the course and end of history, it was left only to determine and correlate the details, identifying the events of their day with biblical types. The details of Israel were used to shed light on the nature and place of the church in the last days.

As men of the church, the Albury Circle had as its first priority, its transformation and renewal. This they attempted, not only through seeking to restore her to previously known purity, but even more by redefining, in the light of last day’s revelation, what it meant to be the church. The shaping concepts, as we have seen, began with Irving and his preface to *Ben Ezra*. Using the literal-typological hermeneutic, Irving concluded there must always remain a sharp distinction between Israel and the church. While the latter was typically prefigured in the former, the two remained absolutely distinct.

Years have now passed since the Lord enabled me to discern that the Jew in the flesh was but the type of the Christian in the Spirit; and that every prophecy of the Old Testament, when literally made out in respect to the Jews was but, as it were, the pitcher in which the waters of the Spirit were held for the church; or, if to them a pitcher full of water, to us a pitcher full of wine, changed by the word of Jesus, who therein did shew forth his glory.<sup>17</sup>

Such figural images of the church in Israel led to specific prophetic conclusions regarding the nature and shape of the church. First, as specified above, the church was to possess a deeper manifestation or presence of the Holy Spirit. Second,

salvation was offered to the Jews; which being by them rejected, the kingdom of God was taken from them and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof (Matt. xxi. 43), and to this newly chosen people are now transferred all the prerogatives of the people of God. . . . During the present dispensation the church is the people of God, but in a state typified by and corresponding with that of the children of Israel wandering in the wilderness. We like them wait for our inheritance.<sup>18</sup>

The salient points of Israel’s history became the die through which the character and direction of the church were extruded. The Jews, having been called by God and

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<sup>16</sup> *TMW* I:116.3. Ever seeking to defend their opinions from the charge of subjectivism, the writer notes the inherent safe-guards of their method: “To trust any one of these, irrespective of the other two, can only lead to error.”

<sup>17</sup> *TMW* VI:108.9f—September 1832. “Jesus our Ensemble, That We Should Follow in His Steps.” Edward Irving. Irving is reflecting upon ideas that took form through his translation of *Ben Ezra* and may be dated c. 1825.

<sup>18</sup> *TMW* III:253.3, 8—June 1831.

*-Chapter Four-*  
**Doctrine Through the Premillennial Forge**

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made his people, began a faithful covenant relationship with their Deliverer. In time, this dissolved into an idolatry and faithlessness that repeatedly rejected the summons of the prophets to return to God and his covenant. In the end, in the culminating act of their apostasy, Israel rejected Jesus and the outpouring of God's Holy Spirit. This led to their own rejection by God,<sup>19</sup> the destruction of the temple and the end of Israel as a nation. Yet, amid the faithless and apostate people, God had nevertheless reserved a remnant of faithful witnesses from which he built a new people who would bear his name and word in the next dispensation, the church. God, in his great mercy, granted a brief pause between the Ascension/Pentecost and the destruction of the temple, a final opportunity to repent of their error and turn before the passing of the age. Finally, in literal fulfillment of the prophetic Word, the Jews would be literally restored as a nation to their homeland at the initiation of the millennial kingdom.

Irving and his Circle held that each of these (and many other smaller details) were antitypically manifested in the history of the church which in turn prophetically imaged God's teleological goal. Like Israel, the church had received God's word and salvation. Having begun in faith, it nevertheless, fell into the apostasy and idolatry of the papacy. Repeated calls of the "prophets," including the reformers, were consistently rejected and the influence of apostasy and idolatry spread to engulf Christendom. "We have seen how, since the Reformation, all things have been favouring that principle of self-sufficing individuality in man, which is infidelity in the head, and self-worship in the heart, and liberalism in politics."<sup>20</sup> This was allowed by God until the 1,260 years of the papacy reached their fulfillment, at which time his final judgment began with the "great earthquake" of the French Revolution. Christendom was rejected, as the Jews had been. Yet, there remained a brief period between this rejection and the final outpouring of God's wrath, an opportunity in which God established a faithful remnant who recognized the signs of the times and turned from apostate Christendom to grasp his purpose as another dispensation drew to a close. The restoration of the Jews to their homeland, an historical fact in the eyes of Albury, albeit yet realized, was a type of the resurrection

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<sup>19</sup> *TMW* III:300.9; IV:343f.

<sup>20</sup> *TMW* I:638.9—December 1829. "Answer to the Question, What was the Reformation?" Alexander Scott.

(rapture) of the saints: "But the restoration of the Jews is called their resurrection, Ezek. xxxvii. 12; and being not only the type, but the accompaniment, of the resurrection of the saints, and effected by Him who has already become the first-fruits of them that sleep (I Cor. v. 7)."<sup>21</sup> A faithful remnant, consisting of those that had refused to bow their knee to the Baal of their own day, stood amid a brief and eerie calm as God summoned the last of his church before the final judgments fell.

Albury's ecclesiology, as expressed in *The Morning Watch*, was shaped almost exclusively from the Circle's premillennial perspectives. Irving had long preferred the *Scots Confession* of 1560 feeling it possessed a more "honest style. . . without affection to logical precisions" found in the Westminster Confession.<sup>22</sup> Twice each year, Irving read the *Scots Confession* to his congregation. Nevertheless, his doctrine of the church took a decidedly different shape as the implications of the premillennial hermeneutic and system took priority in defining doctrine.

Where the Circle maintains a sharp and permanent distinction between Israel and the church, the *Scots Confession* denies any such separation. Across all time, from creation to the second Advent, there has and will exist "one Kirk, that is to say, one company and multitude of men chosen by God, who rightly embrace him by true faith in Christ Jesus." This "Kirk" is comprised of those "chosen of all ages, of all realms, nations, and tongues, be they Jews or be they Gentiles, who have communion and society with God the Father, and with his Son, Christ Jesus, through the sanctification of his Holy Spirit."<sup>23</sup> Additionally, the general shape of the church for Albury was antitypological and therefore historicist, determined by the parameters and shape of history, through a temporal cycle that moves through the intendment of the Divine will, human rebellion and failure, to a new and later manifestation of the protological design. The *Scots Confession*, on the other hand, is profoundly Christocentric in its approach. It understands the church as the assembly of those called from death into life in a continuous and unbroken line. Thus, Israel actually participated in the life of the church. Their

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<sup>21</sup> *TMW* IV:6.5—September 1831. "There Remaineth a Rest to the People of God." [John Tudor]

<sup>22</sup> Quoted in A. L. Drummond, *Irving*, p. 110.

<sup>23</sup> *Scots Confession*, article XVI.

own history pointed ahead to the Incarnation as “it bodied forth continuously in its history the promise which at last was fulfilled in its midst by the incarnate Advent of the Son of God.”<sup>24</sup> This continuity could not exist for Albury, whose historicist understanding led the Circle to make the existence of the church contingent upon the failure of Israel.<sup>25</sup> While there exists between Israel and the church a typological correspondence, their organic relationship is characterized by discontinuity, a fact compounded by the dispensational system that saw between them two distinct revelations requiring similar though ultimately unique responses. Each exists separately as differentiated elements of a repeating cycle in which God calls, redeems, and ultimately rejects a faithless people, only to begin again. The end comes upon Christendom, even as it had come to Israel, not as consummation of God’s will for his chosen people held under his preserving care, but in judgment, in response to failure rather than God’s promise, in wholly negative rather than positive terms. Though nurtured under the *Scots Confession* and ostensibly maintaining its doctrines, the contributors to *The Morning Watch* had, nevertheless—and without any apparent awareness of having done so, re-imagined the shape and nature of the church in the form determined by their premillennial outlook.

The premillennial hermeneutic and system did more than simply transfigure central doctrines of the church. It also created completely new elements in ecclesiology. Albury’s effort to correlate a broad and diverse number of issues and integrate them within the single premillennial system illustrates the creativity of the Circle in forming doctrine around this new center. The difficulties are obvious: the existence of both Israel and the church were undeniable. A strictly literal reading required that no promise meant for Israel could be applied literally to the church; the prophetic nature of Scripture required that every temporal reality of the church age be reflected in explicit prophetic promise. This raised a fundamental question for the Circle, a point not missed by their detractors: why do the church and the central issues of the church age remain

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<sup>24</sup> T. F. Torrance, *Scottish Theology: From John Knox to John McLeod Campbell* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), p. 27.

<sup>25</sup> “On the ruins of the Jewish church and state God raised the Christian polity; and on the ruins of the Christian polity shall the millennial dispensation be raised, wherein the church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven, shall manifest in perfection that which all preceding governments have but partially typified” (*TMW* IV:440.4—December 1831).

unmentioned in the prophecies? Albury's answer, begun simply, evolved into ever more complex doctrines needed to explain the existence of the church *vis-à-vis* Israel.

The Christian dispensation is so sparingly mentioned in the Prophets, that many have considered it as a kind of parenthesis in their discourse, or at least as an interval of Jewish suffering too painful to be dwelt upon by a Jew, and therefore that he willingly over-leaped it, and passed at once from the former to the latter glory of his people. . . .<sup>26</sup>

Here the church age represents a "parenthesis" in God's revelation, a moment of prophetic silence in which the (Jewish) prophets, too shocked by the foreknowledge of Israel's failure and God's turning to another people, overlook the church age altogether and turn their attention to Israel's ultimate glory in the millennial kingdom.

Over time, this "parenthesis" of silence takes on a doctrinal reality. In discussing "the fall of Babylon," a term which the writer uses to denote "the whole of the occurrences happening in these last days of the Gentile dispensation," this prophetic silence takes on a new and important meaning.

There is a singular abruptness in the Apocalypse, in passing from the downfall [sic] of ecclesiastical Babylon, in chap. xix., to the immediate events of the Millennium, in chap. xx., on the momentous conflicts of the anti-christian apostasy with the supernatural deliverance of the Jews. It is because these last events appertain not to the Gentile spiritual dispensation, but to the Mosaic, and therefore occupy so large a space in the Old-Testament prophetic writings. . . . The Apocalypse dwells on the Millennium, in the last two chapters, as regards the condition of the raised saints, because that is the great state of reward of the church of the Gentile dispensation.<sup>27</sup>

The Gentile dispensation, i.e. the church age, is contrasted with the Mosaic, being identified as the "spiritual dispensation." With this, the church came to take on a completely new visage. Of the seven dispensations, two receive particular prophetic

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<sup>26</sup> *TMW* III:253.9f—June 1831. It is impossible to know who or how many are understood here with the term "many." The concept of the church age being parenthesis in the prophetic structure of the Bible will later become profoundly important in J. N. Darby and dispensationalism. It remains an open question whether Albury invented the concept, received it from elsewhere and reshaped it, or simply passed along what "many" were speculating.

<sup>27</sup> *TMW* V:75.5—March 1832. "The Fall of Babylon." Cf. "The Old-Testament prophets, with the exception of Daniel, concern themselves with few or no occurrences to happen to the Gentile world, unless immediately connected with their own people. Accordingly, the period of the present dispensation, from the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispensation of the Jews, is by them passed over in silence, till the time of their restoration to the Holy Land, yet to take place" (*TMW* III:472.9f).

-Chapter Four-  
Doctrine Through the Premillennial Forge

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phasis in the Bible: the Jewish and the millennial. The dispensation of the Gentiles,<sup>28</sup> coming between the two, is understood as a unique period, largely ignored by biblical prophecy and therefore dependent upon the contemporary revelation of Holy Spirit if its meaning is to be discerned. Edward Irving writes:

In one word, we stood for two personal comings of Christ, the one in suffering mortal flesh, the other in glorified immortal flesh, and a church gathered in the mean time of spiritual persons, to sit with him on his throne, and reign as his queen by his side for ever. The two extremes of the truth we saw; the one the dispensation of fleshly ordinances headed up in the Word made flesh, the other the dispensation of glory commencing in the Second Advent, and consummated at the end of the millennium; but the middle space between these extremes, which chiefly concerneth us, the coming in and the going out of the spiritual dispensation which we are under, we knew little or nothing of until the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, came to our help, and led us further into the truth, and shewed us the things which are about to come to pass.<sup>29</sup>

The church age, existing between the “dispensation of fleshly ordinances” and “the dispensation of glory” is comprised of “spiritual persons” who will reign with Christ following his Second Advent. Albury had already made a sharp distinction between the church and Israel; by 1832, the true church had become, in the minds of Irving and his circle, almost completely separated from any confessional or institutional structure, being perceived in terms that were spiritualized and ideal. The parenthesis of the church age is an example of Irving subjecting his Christological theology to a premillennial system. The nature of the church becomes decidedly docetic as it is separated from human contingencies and made to have a purely spiritual character. What Irving would never allow done with the nature of Christ has occurred in both his understanding of the Bible and now the church. The true character of each is defined by spiritual

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<sup>28</sup> This period has a number of names through *The Morning Watch*—Dispensation of the Holy Spirit, Dispensation of the Church, Dispensation of the Gentiles—which appear to be synonymous. Following the manifestations of the Holy Spirit at Regent Square the journal will increasingly use the term “spiritual dispensation” to describe the church age.

<sup>29</sup> *TMW* VI:263.4—December 1832. “An Interpretation of the Fourteenth Chapter of the Apocalypse.” Edward Irving. It is interesting to compare Irving’s statement with one more recent: “Messiah, was rejected, cut off, and had nothing. What then? God signified His sense of this act by suspending for a time His dispensational dealings with Israel. The course of time is interrupted. There is a great gap . . . and all time since the death of Messiah has been an unnoticed interval—a break or parenthesis, during which Christ has been hidden in the heavens, and the Holy Ghost has been working on earth forming the body of Christ, the church, the heavenly bride. When the last member shall have been incorporated into this body, the Lord Himself shall come and receive His people to Himself, to conduct them back to the Father’s house, . . . while God will by His governmental dealings, prepare Israel and the earth for the introduction of the first-begotten into the world.” C. H. Mackintosh, *Papers on the Lord’s Coming* (London: G. Morrish, N.D.), pp. 102-103.

realities essentially isolated from human limitations or existence. Revelation takes on a gnostic dimension as truth becomes available to a few who have been spiritually set apart. The Spirit is not personal transforming power through whom the work and benefits of Christ are given, but a means of special revelation available only to the truly spiritual. With Israel's rejection of their Messiah, God turns to a provisional endeavour, the "mystery of the temporary dispensation to the Gentiles,"<sup>30</sup> buying time and a new course by which they may be saved.

These perspectives had led them to the following conclusions: The church was not part of God's original plan, but the Divine response to Israel's rejection of their Messiah. It exists now as a temporary, hidden, spiritual body, awaiting the Lord's return and resumption of his intended plan of establishing his kingdom on Earth through Israel. The singular task of the faithful in their own day was to prepare for the Second Advent.<sup>31</sup> In the early years of the journal this was understood as opening the eyes of the larger church to prophetic realities in the hope of bringing its reform and renewal. Even in the first year following manifestations of the Holy Spirit in Scotland, the Watchmen spoke passionately and hopefully of reviving the church.<sup>32</sup> In the latter years, this changed, being understood as snatching brands from the burning, the saving of all that could be grasped before the great and terrible Day of the Lord. The larger church, with its various confessions and organization, was characterized as apostate, hostile to God and his saints, and, therefore, under judgment. Missionary activity, in all its varied forms, was at best naïve, and at worst an intentional rejection of God's will and work revealed in the prophecies. The spiritual condition of the church and world lay completely beyond restorative possibility, and thus, cataclysmic destruction awaited both. Israel, the Church, and faithful remnant would each see profoundly different futures at the Second Advent. Those who were truly spiritual, who eagerly awaited his coming, would themselves be snatched from the flames, raptured and thus rescued from the tribulation to come. God's judgment would fall as severe tribulation, destroying his enemies and bring-

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<sup>30</sup> *TMW* VII:85.9—March 1833. "Arrows Against Babylon."

<sup>31</sup> "The immediate coming of Christ, and our preparation to meet Him, should be now the sole object of steadfast faith, and earnest desire, and constant preparation" (IV:253.6; see also: I:48.5; IV:46; VI:7, 85).

<sup>32</sup> See *TMW* II:666. "The Church with Her Endowment of Holiness and Power." Edward Irving.



-Chapter Four-  
Doctrines Through the Premillennial Forge

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ing the Jews to a point where they accept Jesus as their Messiah.<sup>33</sup> The Lord will then return with those raptured, reigning with his faithful in a New Jerusalem where the millennial Israel serves as priests in a new temple<sup>34</sup> and the apostate church is forever removed.

### (3) Christology Through The Premillennial Forge

The doctrines of the atonement and Christology too were re-forged under the press of the premillennial scheme.<sup>35</sup> While the Cross never appears to be intentionally marginalized, one nevertheless gets the impression that it is viewed by Albury as more an accident of history than focal point of God's saving work. Admittedly, the evidence is opaque and conflicting. On the one hand, the journal unites the cross and incarnation within the eternity of the trinity:

Now as it was the essence of the Divine purpose, that Christ should first be the Lamb slain, before he was the first-begotten from the dead, that he should be a mortal before he was an immortal body; for in character of the Lamb slain was he contemplated from the foundation of the world; therefore was it also necessary that the creature type to

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<sup>33</sup> The restoration of the Jews is a profoundly important issue to *The Morning Watch* but one which may only be summarized here: 1) Though the Jews have many times rejected God, it is foretold that they will "embrace their own Messiah." 2) the Jews will be brought back to their own land where they will be a prosperous honourable, and religious nation. 3) On resettlement of their land some enemies will make an attack on them. 4) God's defense will make a real impact on the Gentiles and be the means of bringing in the fullness of them. 5) Three additional points are made: a) prophecies do not refer to those returning from Babylon, but something greater; b) most prophecies refer to the return from greatest dispersion; c) the form of government and religion in Israel when this happens can not be known with certainty, but God will see that it "can be reconciled with the genius and force of the Christian religion." See "On the Restoration of the Jews", TMW I:72-75. For additional references in *The Morning Watch*, see: I:157.3; 186.8; 247.9; 271f; II:307.8; 727.5; 784.9; III:102.5; 252f; 260.8; 300.9; 313; IV:55.3; 231.5; 253.4; 344.7; V:68.7; 73.1; 238.5; VI:56ff; 259.6; 351.9.

<sup>34</sup> The sacrifices offered in the millennial temple are understood as new sacraments that bear witness to the grace of that dispensation, as typified in the Feast of Tabernacles (III:256). Israel's restoration to Jerusalem and Messiah does not, however, put them on equal footing with the faithful remnant that comprises the true church: "The church are thus the sons of God the bride, the companion of the Lamb. The Israel after the flesh become again the people of God; ministers, not sons; a royal priesthood, not kings and priests; the worshippers towards the most holy place, not its privileged inhabitants; the earthly Jerusalem, not the heavenly; they dispensing to the world the blessings they receive from the church now enshrined and glorified in the heavenly Jerusalem. And the nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it, and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it (Rev. xxi. 24. 27)" (III:260.8).

<sup>35</sup> Regrettably, space allows little more than this cursory glance at the atonement. For further study on the doctrine in *The Morning Watch*, see: I:442.6 II:435.2; 437.8; 438.4; III:377.7; IV:350.7; VI: 42.8. At the risk of generalization, *The Morning Watch* appears only peripherally interested in the doctrine of the atonement, their primary emphasis here being the refutation of Calvinism's limited atonement and the maintaining of a perichoretic understanding in which all three members of the Trinity participate fully and actively in the salvation of humanity.

-Chapter Four-  
Doctrine Through the Premillennial Forge

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which his Divine Person was to be united, should have a part, capable of being slain, before it was made immortal.<sup>36</sup>

The incarnation is clearly an expression of an inner-Trinitarian dynamic. The Circle held that the “constituting of the Christ, or the bringing in of the only begotten in the form of a creature, was the great purpose and end of creation, without which creation is a disordered chaos, and unstable infirmity, a mass of unredeemed iniquity, a thing out of God, and consequently unable to stand in any blessedness.”<sup>37</sup> But to interpret this in any terms other than those of the premillennial kingdom is to misunderstand the controlling perspective of *The Morning Watch*. Order rent from chaos and stability brought to infirmity were realities characteristic of the millennial kingdom and only there accomplished. For the Albury Circle, the ideal of Christ was not that seen in his first Advent but that expected in his second. The cross is seen, then, as a step toward a higher goal, an act perhaps originally unintended but made necessary by human freedom. “It was not in the Father’s purpose willingly to afflict him, but only through the intermediate contingency of men’s wickedness all of which he suffered, as one suffers ill-treatment ‘in the house of his friends.’”<sup>38</sup> In any case, the cross pales before the prophetic spectrum that takes revelatory precedent as the will of God is discerned. From Irving’s perspective, it is the preaching of prophecy and a last day’s outpouring of the Spirit, not the cross that is foolish.<sup>39</sup> Even the effect of the cross is rendered debatable as the content of saving faith shifts to millennial doctrine those who have faith in the cross, but, nevertheless, denied prophetic realities, are found left at the rapture to face the tribulation and “sufferings worse than death.”<sup>40</sup> Ultimately, *The Morning Watch* places the focus of the Gospel not on the cross but the “coming glories of our Lord”,<sup>41</sup> not upon a

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<sup>36</sup> *TMW* VII:58.7—March 1833. The conflict between Albury’s understanding of the cross as viewed from its ecclesiology and that deduced here from the doctrine of the Trinity, is glaring.

<sup>37</sup> *TMW* VII:58.1—March 1833.

<sup>38</sup> *TMW* IV:350.7—December 1831.

<sup>39</sup> *TMW* III:479.9f—June 1831. Cf. I Cor. 1:18-25.

<sup>40</sup> *TMW* V:14.7—March 1832. The efficacy of the cross is further blurred through Albury’s belief that the millennial kingdom will see the full restoration of Old Covenant sacrifices in a rebuilt temple. See *TMW* III:249-261—June 1831, *The People of God, in Ancient, Present, and Future Time*, John Tudor. See also V:239.8.

<sup>41</sup> *TMW* I:185.3.

*theologia crucis* but an imminent *theologia gloriae* centered on the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth.

The discussion of the atonement, naturally, leads to a fuller discussion of Albury's premillennial Christology. Yet, for all its preeminence in *The Morning Watch*, Albury's precise Christology remains elusive through the pages of the journal. There are several reasons for this. First, the terminology is often misleading, as traditional vocabulary finds subtle redefinition within the premillennial framework. Thus, Albury's description of Jesus' humanity differs between the First and Second Advents though both are expressed in nearly identical terms. Second, and building upon this, *The Morning Watch* actually limns competing Christologies. One, being by far the more dominant in terms of space and intentional reflection, brilliantly reflects an orthodox Chalcedonian Christology.<sup>42</sup> The other, taking relatively less space but far the more influential and systematically controlling, conveys the Christ of the millennial reign. Both exist across the pages of *The Morning Watch*, often in systematic isolation, making it possible to draw conclusions which, while true and accurate, are, nevertheless, unconnected to Irving's own theological center and intent. The recurring course in Irving studies is to isolate from the larger context of his thought those elements of particular interest and convey them as the whole, center, or theme of his theology. Such courses have taken a variety of forms, both positive and negative. Gordon Strachan, with scarcely a mention of Irving's millennialism, portrayed the Scot minister as brilliant exponent and forefather of modern Pentecostalism.<sup>43</sup> Arnold Dallimore takes a similar course of opposite polemic,

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<sup>42</sup> See for example: "On the Human Nature of Christ," Edward Irving (*TMW* I:75-79, 240-42). "On the Humanity of Christ," Edward Irving (*TMW* I:421-45). "A Defense of the Athanasian Creed, In Answer to the Attack of the Rev. R. H. Came and others," Thos. Wm. Cavalier, esq. (*TMW* I:446-69). "On the Human Nature of Christ," Anon. (*TMW* I:107-140, 320-28). "On the Human Nature of Christ," Anon. (*TMW* III:112-37). "Tertullian on the Humanity of Our Lord," Anon. (*TMW* III:226-36). My purpose here is not to challenge or critique the content of these articles or the excellent studies made of them (Andrew Walker, "The Angel of Regent Square," 4 December 1984, BBC Radio Four. Colin Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* *op. cit.* Colin Gunton, "Two Dogmas Revisited" *op. cit.* Graham McFarlane, *Christ and the Spirit*, *op. cit.* Graham McFarlane, "Strange News From Another Star," *op. cit.*). Indeed, I affirm both. My purpose is only to show that within *The Morning Watch*, another Christology exists, beside that expressed in these articles and the studies made of them, and it is this "other" Christology, at least in *The Morning Watch*, that functions as the more central and influential of the two.

<sup>43</sup> Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology of Edward Irving* (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1973).

drawing attention to Irving's neo-Pentecostalism, alleged Christological heresies, and idiosyncrasies, as a means of dismissing him and tainting, through guilt by association, the modern charismatic movement.<sup>44</sup> Through the recent renaissance in Irving studies, many have taken Irving's Christology, isolated from any discussion of his premillennialism, and made him the paramour of a Chalcedonian Christology in the early modern period. The style of Irving's writing makes these courses possible and perhaps inevitable. He was, unquestionably, an intelligent theologian with a remarkable gift of expressing a theme, with depth and passion, to theological conclusions. This intensity of focus created texts wholly shaped by the point at hand and thus easily read in isolation from the larger premillennial perspective that Irving held to be the center of all theology. And, thus, it is here that many have been thrown off the scent. Expecting to find in Irving a systematic theologian with Christocentric or pneumacentric interests, and discovering apparent validation in particular set of texts, many have portrayed Irving as something he is not. But Irving was not a systematic theologian as properly understood. He never created an ordered theology of carefully interconnected themes. There never was, for Irving, a *Summa Theologiae*, *Institutes*, or *Kirchliche Dogmatik*. Thus, his Christology, carefully stated in terms far advanced for his day though it was, was never carefully connected to other doctrines in his theology.<sup>45</sup> Additionally, where connections do occur—one thinks here of elements of his pneumatology—there remains underneath them all, the ever-surging mass of Irving's imminent adventism. And it is here and not elsewhere, that one finds the center of Irving's theology, the guiding parameters of any systemization he sought to produce. Perhaps, then, Irving may be considered a systematic theologian. But his approach, in spite of a remarkable Christology, was not Christocentric. His center, in spite of a passion for the Holy Spirit, was not pneumacentric. Irving was a theologian of the millennium, and it is from this perspective, alone, that the real Irving, the whole Irving, may be understood. And thus it is from this perspective that his Chris-

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<sup>44</sup> Dallimore, *op. cit.*

<sup>45</sup> Much of Irving's theological works are published sermons, rather than systematic expositions. And while volume five of his collected works presents Irving's Christology at its best, a corpus carefully edited and compiled by another should not be equated to a systematic theology. *The Morning Watch* presents perhaps the best insight into the true Irving as articles of diverse and varied content weave across the pages and years to produce a composite more consistent with the man he was.

-Chapter Four-  
Doctrine Through the Premillennial Forge

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tology must be reassessed, for it, like many other doctrines, was reshaped under the forge of premillennial expectations.

It might even be said that the men of the *Watch*, and the interpretations of traditional Protestantism, begin from essentially opposite points. Classically, Reformed theology would hold that “the question of the approach to eschatology can only be worked out in terms of what are the essentials of the Christian faith.”<sup>46</sup> Even assuming the famous dictum, “if Christianity be not altogether thoroughgoing eschatology, there remains in it no relationship whatever with Christ,”<sup>47</sup> or Barth’s later conclusion that dogma is an “eschatological concept,”<sup>48</sup> eschatology remains a contingent doctrine deductively drawn from the incarnation. Noting the non-worldly, i.e. eschatological character of the teaching and work of Jesus and the events and message of the New Testament, led to the defining and shaping of eschatological realities in the image of the Christ event. The eschatological elements found in the central dogmas of the church—Christology, salvation under its various descriptions,<sup>49</sup> and the gift and presence of Holy Spirit, to name three of particular relevance—are deduced not in isolation, but as necessary elements of these “essentials of the Christian faith.” The incarnation, with all its historicity, provides the basis for deducing, defining, and conjoining in systematic unity, the doctrine of eschatology.

The approach of *The Morning Watch* lies in the opposite direction, as the millennial kingdom was made the central reality from which Christological doctrines were drawn. While such definitions often took the form of traditional language within *The Morning Watch*, their intended meaning never strayed from the regnant paradigm of the millennial kingdom. The Christ, central to Albury’s interest, is not the Jesus of the First Advent but the Second, not the Son whose self-emptying humility joined himself to

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<sup>46</sup> Weber, *Foundations*, p. 11:657.

<sup>47</sup> Karl Barth, *Romans*, tr. E. C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1933-65), p. 314.

<sup>48</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I:1 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, ), p. 309. This idea may be found earlier in *Die christliche Dogmatik im Entwurf; Die Lehre vom Worte Gottes* (Munich: Kaiser, 1927), I. 112 and 123.

-Chapter Four-  
Doctrine Through the Premillennial Forge

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human flesh in time, but the glorified, immortal Christ who will return in triumph to reign as immortal earthly king. Beginning with the ideal of the end, Albury shaped the meaning and course of every element of history, including the incarnation.

The catalyst for this lay in the heuristic canons inherent within Albury's dispensational philosophy of history and correlative hermeneutic. The Christ of the millennium and history's progress toward this goal provided the paradigm around which the doctrine of Christ was given its primary and controlling form. An example may be seen in Albury's reinterpretation of the threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King.<sup>49</sup> The traditional understanding is transformed by the expectations of the prophetic chronology, forcing each office to be identified with, and made uniquely relevant to, a particular age. The character and sequence of the various dispensations, held as axiomatic, in turn required a fourth office, which, when combined with the other three provide a full picture of the work of Christ: "1. To the Jews he is revealed as *the Prophet*. . . . 2. To us Gentiles he is *the Priest*. . . . 3. Christ shall come again as *the King*. . . . 4. Christ is revealed as *the Judge* of all men in the general resurrection."<sup>51</sup> This is consistent with Albury's hermeneutic which sought to demonstrate across history a concerted work through the connection of promise, type, and antitypical consummation. Christology is then fully grasped through the accretion and connection of each constituent element under the cynosure<sup>52</sup> of the millennial kingdom. "To know the great purpose of God

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<sup>49</sup> Various examples might include: Save/salvation—I Cor. 1:21; Heb. 7:25; Rom. 1:16, 13:11; Eph. 1:13; I Tim. 1:15; Titus 2:11; Luke 2:30, 3:6. Reconcile/reconciliation—II Cor. 5:18-20; Col. 1:20ff; Rom. 5:10f; Eph. 2:16. Forgive/forgiveness—Rom. 4:7; Eph. 1:7; I Jn. 2:12; Col. 2:13. Rescue—Col. 1:13; I Thess. 1:10. The eschatological nature of these is seen in Paul's summary: τὰ δὲ πάντα ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ καταλλάξαντος ἡμᾶς ἑαυτῷ διὰ Χριστοῦ (II Cor. 5:18).

<sup>50</sup> The twofold office (*munus duplex*) comprised of the sacerdotal and royal has a long history. Calvin is responsible for joining to these the office of prophet, forming the *munus triplex*, though Andreas Osiander had produced a similar formula. Cf. E. F. Karl Müller, "Jesus Christ, Threesfold Office of," *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, ed. S. M. Jackson (3rd ed., repr. Of 1907 edition; Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977).

<sup>51</sup> *TMW* III:337.5—June 1831. "Jesus the Head over all things." See also II:520.3—September 1830: "The Lord Jesus Christ was anointed unto the threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King. Into the two first he has entered fully, but unto the last he has not yet attained. It is later is stated that he will not assume this office, "till the death of him whom Saul was the type, even Antichrist, the man of sin, who shall fall in the battle of Armageddon" (520.6).

<sup>52</sup> *Cynosure* from Latin *cynosūra*, and in turn, from Greek *kynosoura* (dog's tail), referring to Ursa Minor (which contains the guiding star Polaris); cf. *TMW* I:1.4 where prophecy is described as the "pole-star to direct our course, and an anchor of safety to the soul".

*-Chapter Four-*  
*Doctrine Through the Premillennial Forge*

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which he will mark out from the beginning to the end of time, and to see that purpose to be worthy of himself, is to receive a key to the opening of all the mysteries of creation and providence; a key to the revelation committed to us, which shall reconcile all things."<sup>53</sup>

Consequently, the interpretive center of the Bible shifts from the Gospels and the incarnation to the Apocalypse which Tudor described as that place "we derive the full and certain knowledge of the reign of Christ upon earth, and learn to understand the long and varied series of events by which this glorious kingdom is prepared and announced." And again, "this consummation of the purpose of God. . . is nowhere laid down explicitly. . . except in the Apocalypse."<sup>54</sup> Revelation is designated "that book which interprets all Scripture and to which all Scripture looks for interpretation."<sup>55</sup> The essential and ultimate meanings of Christ are not to be found in his incarnation. For this, while valid and revelatory, grants only partial insight into the actual nature of Christ. "The Apocalypse is the manifestation of Jesus Christ,"<sup>56</sup> and only in the realization of that age which it foretold would the whole be actually known. Albury held that the true nature of Christ had actually been hidden in previous dispensations and was only then being revealed through the unveiling of the prophetic Scriptures and their disclosure of millennial realities. The opening of the Apocalypse and other prophecies produced an expanding understanding of the person of Christ. "Is it any wonder, if this last dispensation of Christ's Second Coming in Spirit be more spiritual, pure, and glorious, than any that have yet been generally embraced? Especially considering that it hath been God's usual way to make latter dispensations, exceed former in glory."<sup>57</sup> Albury's ap-

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<sup>53</sup> *TMW* I:396.9—September 1829. R. Baxter, esq. This is an interpretive axiom and appears repeatedly in the journal. One writer, in describing the importance of prophecy studies states, "The point at issue is neither more nor less than what God has revealed to be his chief end in creation and redemption; to which end all other acts of God in providence are only supportive" (*TMW* I:246.8). And again, four years later: "The promise of God was wrapped up in the mystery of Christ; which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed by the Gospel" (*TMW* VII: 28.5—March 1833). The mystery of Christ is the revelation of his millennial identity and the Gospel is understood as the full revelation of God's saving work gained through prophetic insight.

<sup>54</sup> *TMW* I:280.4—September 1829.

<sup>55</sup> *TMW* II:799.2—December 1830. Irving.

<sup>56</sup> *TMW* I:543—December 1829.

<sup>57</sup> *TMW* VII:375.7—June 1833.

proach saw the coming millennium and its unveiling of Christ as the remedy to the inchoate revelation of the First Advent. Revelation, given through the historical, temporal, and incarnate Christ, was awaiting the fullness of the millennium's ideal.

Albury expressed these realities in language that is deceptively disarming and ostensibly Christocentric. "Prophecy no longer is the portraying of an important event about to come, but is the manifesting more fully and clearly of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the accomplishing of a further part of that great testimony which from beginning to end declareth the glory of God."<sup>58</sup> But the Christ testified to and manifested "more fully and clearly" is not the Jesus of history, but the Christ of premillennial idealism. For Irving and his circle found Christ's "validity" or "essence" not in the earthly figure of Jesus or any temporal manifestation, but the spiritual, glorified, and perfect Christ of the age to come. But is this not essentially Docetic? Certainly not as anciently understood, for Albury never denied the historical or human Christ. But it, nevertheless, reflects the Docetism of modernity whereby the spiritual is claimed to have unconditional priority over the historical.

Albury's Christological perspective intriguingly reflects the idealism of nineteenth century German liberalism. J. G. Fichte's belief that "the metaphysical only, and not the historical, can give us blessedness; the latter can only give us understanding,"<sup>59</sup> accurately describes Albury's using history to bring understanding or insight of a higher reality which lies behind the temporal accidents. David Friedrich Strauss described his approach saying, "This is the key to the whole of Christology, that, as subject to the predicates which the church assigns to Christ, we place instead of an individual an idea; but an Idea which has an existence in reality, not in the mind only, like that of Kant."<sup>60</sup> Similarly, Albury held that the ultimate actually existed, not as mere idea, but certainly as more than could be contained within any temporal particularity. Irving and his Circle believed, without question, that the Triune God, in the person of the Son, had taken

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<sup>58</sup> *TMW* I:233.2—June 1829. R. Baxter, esq.

<sup>59</sup> J. G. Fichte, *The Way Towards the Blessed Life, or, the Doctrine of Religion*, tr. W. Smith (London: Chapman, 1849 [German: 1806], p. 107.

<sup>60</sup> David Friedrich Strauss, *Life of Jesus*, 3 vols., tr. M. Evans (George Eliot) (London: Chapman Bros., 1846), III: 437.



sinful human flesh and dwelt among us. But this act, in its concrete historicity, was never meant to reveal the essence of either Christ or God as that could only occur in the next age. Finally, Schleiermacher, too, may be used to express Albury's thought, grounding his Christology in the "ideal" which must "have become completely historical in Him, and each historical moment must have at the same time borne within it the ideal."<sup>61</sup> This wonderfully expresses Albury's thesis that accentuates the historicity of the incarnation and the manifestation of deity while maintaining their shift of emphasis from this act to the greater spiritual reality behind it. These quotes are not meant to equate *The Morning Watch* with German liberalism or even suggest that their perspectives, goals and conclusions were identical. Indeed, it is clear that they are not. Nevertheless, there remains, in both, a profound idealism that places ultimate significance not on the historical, temporal, and physical, but on the ideal, eternal, and spiritual, reflecting the Docetism of modernity.

The hundreds of pages dedicated to defending the full humanity of Christ in the journal does not change this focus. Irving himself was concerned that the Christological controversies had forced *The Morning Watch* to defend an element of Christological truth that might actually mislead their readers, corrupting the proper focus on a spiritual and glorified Christ:

In our much conversation, discourse, and argument concerning Jesus in the flesh, we have been tempted to give it an undue preponderance in our creed, and to forget that we have no dealings with him in that form, but ought to know him altogether and only in the Spirit, seeing that by baptism we are buried with him as to the flesh, and quickened with him as to the Spirit, and thereafter have working in us the very same power of the Spirit which sustaineth his feeble flesh in Almighty strength and uncreated glory.<sup>62</sup>

Irving explicitly states the church has "no dealings" with "Jesus in the flesh," having been baptized and thus buried with him to all that is flesh. The incarnation, for all that it revealed and for all its relevance under the dispensation of the Gentiles, pales in meaning and relevance before the millennial Christ known in the Spirit. The premil-

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<sup>61</sup> Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, tr. Mackintosh and Stewart (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1936-69), § 93, thesis.

<sup>62</sup> *TMW* VI:263.9f—December 1832. "An Interpretation of the Fourteenth Chapter of the Apocalypse" (pp. VI: 262-285). Edward Irving.

lennial worldview provided a latter, more spiritual revelation, a new insight to the nature and reality of Christ Jesus and a new power and life for the believer by which the church and her Lord are to be defined.

Albury's Christological idealism led in turn to an idealistic anthropology. The weaknesses and frailties of the flesh known in the church age were fading to reveal and manifest a new, spiritual humanity defined by the millennial ideal. While Albury maintained Christ was the "prototype of a perfect and holy man under the conditions of the fall, that we, under those conditions, might know there was power and will in God that we all be perfect and holy,"<sup>63</sup> it must not be forgotten that Albury's chronology saw this age and life under the conditions of the fall as all but ended. The incarnation, which sufficed as example for eighteen hundred years, was soon to be irrelevant as Christ, then glorified, established his throne. Those raptured before the tribulation will return as "angels."<sup>64</sup> "Those of them who are chosen, and spiritually united to Christ, will likewise be partakers of his super-celestial glory; and perhaps be specially the representatives in the heavenly city, the guardian spirits, the interpreters, and the benefactors of their nation in the flesh."<sup>65</sup> Here the human condition, as understood in the dispensation of the Gentiles, is all but completely stripped away from both Christ and his church as both take on a "super-celestial glory." The Christian of this age was soon to be "translated" from the earth and transformed by Christ into an immortal and glorified being. Albury's interest and hope lay in Christ's "spiritual seed, both of the Jews and Gentiles, transformed into his image, and clothed in glorious and incorruptible bodies by the resurrection of the dead and the change of the living saints, at the close of this dispensation."<sup>66</sup> Following seven years of horrific tribulation, the Lord will return with his saints and reign with them in immortal splendour over those who had survived, specifically Jews and marginal believers, who during the tribulation had found true faith. The Circle

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<sup>63</sup> *TMW* II:663.5—September 1830. "The Church with Her Endowment of Holiness and Power", II:630-668. Edward Irving.

<sup>64</sup> *TMW* IV:278.9—December 1831.

<sup>65</sup> *TMW* III:58.3—March 1831. Edward Irving. See also: "The sons of God, glorified and raised to the throne of Christ, rule in his name" not only over the earth but "instructing and governing ALL THINGS IN HEAVEN LIKEWISE!" (VII:28.2—March 1833). See also III:287.9.

<sup>66</sup> *TMW* IV:440.5—December 1831.

held this glorified state of the millennium had actually begun to manifest at the close of the current age, as a merciful last sign. Though its full realization had yet to manifest, God was producing, in their age, those millennial realities that would soon characterize the church. These are usually discussed in *The Morning Watch* under the rubrics of holiness (or sanctification) and defined as “a perfect conformity in mind and affections to Jesus Christ dwelling in his counsel, and thereby knowing what He is about to do with the nation and with the church.”<sup>67</sup> The Albury Circle held that these realities should in no way be minimized within the current dispensation. “I hold, therefore, that the doctrine preached and received in the churches, to the effect that the saint should not, or need not, be perfect in holiness, is the subversion of Christ’s work in the flesh altogether, and the prevention of holiness in the believer altogether.”<sup>68</sup> The purpose of Christ’s work in the flesh was for the transformation of human flesh into its spiritual ideal. While the goal in the Gentile dispensation is to reflect the earthly life of Jesus, this remains penultimate, for the church under the power of the Holy Spirit was called to manifest a purely spiritual character in which the human was all but completely overwhelmed. This foreshadowed the character of the millennium in which the faithful are understood to be completely spiritual beings, immortal and pure, and reigning with Christ as his co-regents. Albury’s Christology and ecclesiology combine to portray the true church and faithful believer as purely spiritual, freed from the weakness and constraints of the physical creation.

The Christology of Albury’s millennial idealism led to confusing statements regarding the nature and interaction of the Trinity. While infrequent, isolated, and difficult to interpret with any certainty, there remain suggestions within *The Morning Watch*, that the Circle’s premillennial Christology portrayed a modalistic understanding of the Trinity. First, Albury’s use of the name “Jehovah” seems to have two conflicting meanings. On the one hand, it refers to pre-incarnational manifestations of Jesus, while in other occurrences, it seems to refer to God in his Trinitarian unity. “Though our Lord was the eternal word, and in that character ever has been the revealer of the Fa-

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<sup>67</sup> *TMW* VI: 260.8—December 1832. Anonymous.

<sup>68</sup> *TMW* VI: 42.7—September 1832. “Interpretation of the Fourteenth Chapter of the Apocalypse.” Edward Irving.

*-Chapter Four-*  
Doctrine Through the Premillennial Forge

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ther's will; though He as Jehovah conversed with our first parents, talked with Abraham, and spake face to face with Moses; yet as the Son of Man, as God-Man, as Christ, his prophetic office did not begin till after his baptism by John."<sup>66</sup> These partial manifestations of Jehovah reflect Albury's belief in progressive revelation and its fulfillment in the coming and reign of Christ in the millennial kingdom. There, Christ, possessing all the fullness of the Father, will reign as Jehovah, as "the judgment-seat of Christ is that of God, who is also Jehovah."<sup>67</sup> But in this, the persons of the Trinity meld as perichoretic activity and distinction appears to dissolve: "The throne of God being no longer encircled by the prismatic glory of the Trinity, as contemplated in the separated rays of purpose, accomplishment, and application; but Jehovah shall be king over all the earth."<sup>68</sup> Can it be that Albury's idealized Christ is Jehovah, free of Trinitarian confusion? Do these statements suggest that the perichoresis describes a reality more contingent upon the needs of a fallen world than the actual nature of God? Has the immanent Trinity been dissolved within a temporal and temporary economic Trinity? In *The Morning Watch*, these remain legitimate, if unanswerable questions.

There combine, in Albury's Christology, two forces that shape their Christology. The first, is a premillennial idealism that posits behind any historical manifestations a Christological ideal. Second, is a dispensational historicism that cleaves the Christ ideal into multiple manifestations across history, each expressing only a partial revelation of the ideal. Albury did not fall into common Christological error. They neither confused the two natures in the one Person, nor divided the Person through over emphasis of the two natures. Their error lay in leaving behind the human for the greater insight of the spiritual. Christ was split, not at the usually conceived fissures between natures and person, but a division of the natures across time as Christ's humanity, eternally true but specifically relevant for a particular age, was left behind for the higher and greater reality of the next dispensation. Christological issues will resurface as we turn first to the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the next chapter and second, assess their teleological worldview at the study's conclusion. The Christology of *The Morning Watch* is more

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<sup>66</sup> *TMW* III:82.3—March 1831. "On the Names of Christ." *TMW* III:81-112. John Tudor.

<sup>67</sup> *TMW* II:809.5—December 1830. Immediately before this the name Jehovah is used to identify Christ Jesus.

complex than a partial reading might reveal. Truly, whole articles of substantial length articulate a profoundly sound and creative Christology. To limit one's study of Albury's perspective to these portions would easily give the impression that Irving and his Circle were Christocentric theologians of great depth. But there remain between these articles, nearly four thousand pages dedicated to expressing a millennial worldview. The Christ portrayed within these pages, often tacitly and vaguely, unveils a decidedly different perspective than that usually associated with Irving. But, across the scope of *The Morning Watch*, there is little question that two Christologies exist, distinct from one another. It was Irving's adventist teleology that gave primary definition to Albury's doctrine of Christ within their larger dogmatics. It was not just the details of Irving's Christology that were shaped by their "eschatology." The entire Christological controversies that engulfed them, and to which they dedicated so much time and space, were understood in terms of last days' apostasy and rejection of God and thus as a sign and inevitable aspect of the end of the Christian dispensation.

#### (4) The Pretribulation Rapture

In addressing Albury's understanding of history (dispensations), ecclesiology, and Christology, it is clear that the premillennial hermeneutic, with its historicist parameters and prophetic expectations, transformed traditional understandings of these areas into new or different concepts. It remains to be seen how the same hermeneutical pressures created new doctrine to fill the requirements of the literal-typical hermeneutic and its systematic articulation.

There are several reasons for using the rapture to illustrate the effect the premillennial hermeneutic and system has on creating doctrine. First, there is no point in which

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<sup>71</sup> *TMW* I:364.6—September 1829. M.

the role of Irving is more controversial or fiercely disputed.<sup>72</sup> It is here, and not elsewhere, that the debate over Irving's influence has raged for at least a hundred and sixty years. Second, while the rapture may appear irrelevant or peripheral to many theologians, it plays a crucial role in premillennial thinking by offering a solution to chiliasm's greatest problem. A literalistic hermeneutic demanded God's original covenant find consummation through the restoration of the Jews to Israel and the revivification of his relationship with them. The rapture—the instantaneous removal of the church from the arena of history at the second coming—allows God to address afresh the Jews without “dividing his time” between them and his people of the next dispensation, the church. The rapture/tribulation scenario offers reward for a faithful remnant, future for the Jews, and wrath for the apostate and ungodly, neatly tying together a number of eschatological loose ends. Third, and consequent to this, the doctrine of the rapture demonstrates the point at hand: premillennialism is incredibly adept at shaping and creating doctrine to fill the gaps within the system. Fourth, and finally, the rapture surprisingly reaches beyond marginal fundamentalism and is itself an important and regnant theme within conservative theology. This doctrine, and the cradle of premillennialism with which it is associated, have helped determine conservative missiology, shaped a unique ecclesiology, and formed a basis of pastoral theology. Thus, whether one views the doctrine as dubious or spurious, or for that matter biblical and important, its historical source and theological reasoning are worth exploring. Additionally, as the doctrine plays an important role in Albury's premillennial scheme, it is a subject profoundly germane to the study at hand.

While the foundational concepts extend to Irving's preface to *Ben Ezra* (1826), the first explicit mention of a pretribulation rapture is found in December 1829, in an article written by John Tudor. Tudor seeks to warn his readers that the time is almost upon them when

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<sup>72</sup> In a paper read on 15 Dec. 1998 before the Research Institute of Systematic Theology at King's College, London. Dr. Martin Sullivan stated that the name Irving is kept alive because of two areas of theological interest: Irving's Christology and his pentecostalism. I concur, but feel the point where Irving is most influential lies in the area of dispensationalism and American Fundamentalism. There perhaps his name is less known and even something of a pariah, but there is certainly no other point where Irving's original influence in defining doctrine can be said to be greater.

-Chapter Four-  
Doctrine Through the Premillennial Forge

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the 'mystery' which St. Paul shews I Cor. xv. 51—even the mystery of the dead being raised incorruptible and the living being changed; when Christ shall give reward to his servants the prophets. . . . on the translation of the saints, the dire judgments on Babylon immediately ensue.<sup>73</sup>

Though the word "rapture" is lacking—it is first used in *The Morning Watch* in June, 1830—the key points are here. The "translation" clearly precedes the judgments that were soon to fall on Christendom (Babylon). It is understood as a mystery kept secret from the church until their own day,<sup>74</sup> yet, nevertheless, set forth by Paul in Scripture.

It remains for Irving to give the clearest statements of the doctrine in the journal's next edition three months later (March, 1830). This comes first in an anonymous article that he almost certainly authored.<sup>75</sup> Here, using the hermeneutic common to Albury, the doctrine is expressed by looking at its historical type:

The Jewish war under Vespasian was to that expiring dispensation of God's dealing with Judaea, what the French Revolution has been to this expiring dispensation of God dealing with Christendom; the pause of peace which followed was to that dispensation what the present interval is to this; and the conclusive war under Titus, was to that what the coming of the Son of Man will be to this. If this be so, let us remember to our unspeakable comfort, that between the departure of Vespasian and the coming of Titus, the elect Jews were drawn out of the city, and gathered to a place of safety.<sup>76</sup>

In "Signs of the Times in the Church" Irving elaborates on the above, giving unique attention to what he had called "our unspeakable comfort." In the face of horrific events ready to fall, the saints are said to "have a promise of escape out of the awful

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<sup>73</sup> *TMW* I:574—December 1829. "On the Interpretation of the Apocalypse." John Tudor, *The Morning Watch*. This is the second of a two-part series by Tudor, the first being "On the Structure of the Apocalypse." Together they contain 106 pages of detailed analysis of the book of Revelation. Volume one of *The Morning Watch* contains 735 pages, well over half of which speaks to issues of prophecy. Charles Ryrie's charge "that Irvingite eschatology is unclear" (*Come Quickly*, p.78) emerges more from his bias than the facts.

<sup>74</sup> Tim LaHaye, a contemporary premillennialist, *No Fear of the Storm: Why Christians will Escape All the Tribulation* (Chichister: New Wine Ministries, 1992), p. 27, states this is one of eleven mysteries revealed in the New Testament but kept hidden to Old Testament saints. He also notes in the preceding page "translation equals rapture."

<sup>75</sup> Though anonymous, it is said to have been written by "a minister of Christ's church," and contains many points of similarity with Irving's known writings including his criticism of Bible societies and the use of the phrase "the coming of the Lord in Glory." More importantly it contains two key elements to his understanding of the rapture—the pause immediately prior to the final destruction and the saving of a small remnant prefigured typologically in Jerusalem's Christians fleeing to Pella before the city's destruction by Titus. Irving will elaborate on both of these, with vocabulary identical to this piece, in a later article in this issue. It was not uncommon for contributors to *The Morning Watch*, including Irving, to write anonymously.

<sup>76</sup> *TMW* II:39.3—March 1830. "The Second Advent of our Lord Jesus." [Edward Irving].

-Chapter Four-  
Doctrine Through the Premillennial Forge

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judgment with which the Gentile church is to be consumed.”<sup>77</sup> Irving states and answers the question that immediately springs to mind:

With respect to the manner in which the remnant of the Gentile church shall escape, I think it is sufficiently declared in the xvth chap. of the I<sup>st</sup> of Corinthians and in the ivth chap. of the I<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians: “Behold, I shew you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” This mystery, which had not been made known to the church before, and is not to be found explicitly in the Old Testament, is spoken to all believers in Christ, and to them only. It is not spoken to all men, but of all believers; of those who are to bear the image of the heavenly Adam; of those who are to inherit the kingdom of God; of those who are to put on incorruption and immortality, and to obtain the triumph over death.<sup>78</sup>

Turning his attention to First Thessalonians 4:15 Irving explains further:

These two passages reveal to us that great mystery of the translation of the living saints, by an instantaneous transition, from the state of mortality into the state of immortality; and this, and no other, do I believe to be the way of our escape. And if, indeed, we consider the nature of the judgments which are then to fall upon Christendom, like the Deluge, or like the burning of Sodom, we may well believe that there is hardly another way conceivable whereby they might be saved.<sup>79</sup>

Irving’s doctrine of the pretribulation rapture is consistent with his premillennial hermeneutic and doctrine and forms an important element in pulling together various aspects within the system. Irving uses the key passages in the first letters to the Corinthians and Thessalonians, interpreting them, as was common to the Albury circle, in a strictly literal fashion. The translation of the saints is presented as a mystery only now made known, reflecting Albury’s belief in progressive revelation. The doctrine emerges from his ecclesiology, explaining God’s plan of saving a faithful, spiritual band as his judgment is poured out on the apostate.

Irving’s thought found elaboration by other writers in *The Morning Watch*, who provide details that were to become cardinal elements of the doctrine, not only in the journal, but as it developed in the coming decades and even into the next century. The first of these aspects is the use made of secondary passages brought in to elucidate

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<sup>77</sup> *TMW* II:156—March 1830. “Signs of the Times in the Church.” Edward Irving.

<sup>78</sup> *TMW* II:157.

<sup>79</sup> *TMW* II:158.



the doctrine and its implications. In a pseudonymous article appearing in December, 1831 the writer interprets John fourteen to be setting forth the doctrine of the rapture:

“He hath prepared for us a city: in his Father’s house are many abodes: he hath gone to prepare our place; and to that place will he receive us in the day of evil, until we are brought with him (I Thess. iv. 14), and set with him on the throne of David. We shall be hid in the day of the Lord’s anger; for God hath promised that by watchfulness and prayer we shall escape all those things that shall come to pass and stand before the Son of Man (Luke xxi. 36; Zeph. ii. 3).<sup>80</sup>

A second elaboration clarifies the rapture’s implications for the Jews. Tudor wrote in March of 1831:

And as the church of Christ shall be gathered to him in the air by the first act of judgment, and thenceforth be for ever with the Lord, and witness his mighty actings and come with him when he comes, and reign with him when he reigns: so at that same time shall those of the Jewish people who have not been converted to Christ be brought, through severe trials and sufferings, into their own land.<sup>81</sup>

The rapture of the saints allowed God to turn his wrath upon fallen Christendom and at the same time readdress Israel as his covenant people, acts that could not occur if the faithful remnant of the church still remained. The spiritual nature of the church is acknowledged by its removal from the world while the Jews, through the tribulation, are brought under the reign of the Messiah they had long rejected. God’s covenant with them and his intendment for the Jewish dispensation, and the prophetic Scriptures in which they are foreseen, are fulfilled.

A third elaboration in *The Morning Watch* emphasizes the imminence of the rapture which was viewed as the next event in the prophetic scheme, occurring without caveat or evidential signs. The contributors of *The Morning Watch* were deeply concerned that readers should not lose their sense of watchfulness or hope by turning their attention to events in the world or church. This is clearly stated in an anonymous article entitled “The Hour of Christ’s Appearance,” published in December, 1831:

We miss the true object of faith and hope in the coming of the Lord, not only when we overleap it altogether, but when we interpose any screen whatever; when we look for any event of persecution or tribulation, for any combination of kings, any gathering of people, any manifestation of Antichrist. The immediate coming of Christ, and our

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<sup>80</sup> *TMW* IV:280—December 1831. “Commentary on the Epistles to the Seven Apocalyptic Churches.” Fidus. See also *TMW* V:238.7.

<sup>81</sup> *TMW* III:13—March 1831. “Prophetic Aspect of the Church; Its privileges and Powers.” John Tudor.

*-Chapter Four-*  
Doctrines Through the Premillennial Forge

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preparation to meet Him, should now be the sole object of steadfast faith, and earnest desire, and constant preparation.<sup>82</sup>

Finally, the Circle envisioned the rapture as a veiled and unintelligible event, the meaning and even occurrence of which would occur unnoticed by the world. Albury concluded that a single return of Christ could not account for either the details given in Scripture or their doctrinal opinions. Consequently, the New Testament parousia was segmented into three distinct phases.

“There are three things particularly to be noticed in our Lord’s advent: First, Our gathering together unto him. . . Secondly, His epiphany or coming in the clouds, and all his saints with power and great glory. . . Thirdly, His *parousia*, or visible presence. . . The visible signs in the heavens will not precede our gathering together unto the Lord, but will be subsequent to it.”<sup>83</sup>

The Rapture of the faithful will be the first of the events ushering in the last days. This appearance will be hidden or secret as Christ was “expected to descend into our atmosphere—invisibly, perhaps, at first, to his enemies.”<sup>84</sup> Albury saw this invisible rapture occurring similarly to the light and voice that came to Paul on the road to Damascus: “though the men that were with him heard a voice, they understood it not; and though they saw a light, they saw not the Saviour.”<sup>85</sup> Unaware of what had just occurred, unbelievers, the apostate, and those of weak faith, would be swept into seven years of horrific tribulation, after which Israel is restored. The distinctions between his epiphany and parousia and the hidden or secret gathering of the Saints make this a very important passage. “To those who are watching and praying, and expecting their Lord, and to them only, will Christ be manifested at the beginning of the DAY of His coming, when he comes as the sign of the Son of Man (Matt. xxiv.) as the morning star (Rev. ii. 28, xxii. 16). To the rest of the church, and to the world, this first appearance will be but as a meteor or cloud of radiance, preternatural and unaccountable but unintelligible.”<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> *TMW* IV:253—December 1831. “The Hour of Christ’s Appearance.” Anonymous. See also: *TMW* IV:325.6; V:3.4; 12.6; VI:12.3. Ryrie has erred in stating “Irvingites obviously did not teach imminency” (Ryrie, *Come Quickly*, p. 78).

<sup>83</sup> *TMW* IV:323.5—December 1831. “The Church’s Expectation.” John Hooper.

<sup>84</sup> *TMW* IV:299.2—December 1831.

<sup>85</sup> *TMW* IV:323n—December 1831.

<sup>86</sup> *TMW* V:374.4—June 1832.

Irving and the Albury Circle saw the pretribulational rapture as a central and necessary element of Christian faith and was anticipated as the singularly most important phenomenon in the prophetic chronology.<sup>87</sup> “But the most important event (so accurately timed in the Bible as to leave no doubt that it takes place during the epiphany) is the resurrection of the dead in Christ, and the change of both them and the then living saints, in the act of their *ἁπάντησις*, or rapture unto the Lord in the air.”<sup>88</sup>

## 2. The Power of Hermeneutics over Dogma

In summarizing the power of Albury’s hermeneutic to shape doctrine, several points are clear. 1) The premillennial worldview was the systematic cornerstone of their theology. In spite of the soundness of Irving’s Christology or Trinitarian theology, neither of these were made the doctrinal center of their systematic theology or even allowed to shape its essential elements. Consequently, Albury’s premillennial and prophetic expectations became the canon by which Scripture was interpreted and all doctrine created, shaped, and defined. 2) Albury’s hermeneutic, with its literal-typical-antitypical interpretive scheme and its consequential unified narrative theory was grasped by the Circle as the means to unveil, for the first time, the grand—and previously unrevealed—meaning of the Bible. Theirs was a day of new insight and fresh revelation, as the church was prepared to meet the last days. 3) This revelation provided the men of the *Watch* with both the grounds and the means to redefine and create doctrine that would allow full systematic articulation of the unified narrative and provide the symmetry demanded by the ideal. 4) The historicist element of Albury’s hermeneutic determined the shape and detail these doctrines would take as the literal-typical hermeneutic required biblical references manifest in their last days’ antitype. Thus Israel’s rejection of Christ required

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<sup>87</sup> The pretribulation rapture is mentioned frequently in the journal. An extensive, though not exhaustive, list of these texts includes: *TMW* I: 289.2; 555.9; 564.5; *TMW* II: 39.3; 277.6; 367.8; 422.6; 423.6; 467.7; 490; 590.7; 746.8; *TMW* III: 13.1; 249.9; 277.5; 284.6; 287.9f; 407.5; *TMW* IV: 214.7; 231.5; 252.8; 253f; 260.9; 264.8; 269.6; 277.6; 279.9f; 280.9; 298.6f; 299.5; 322f; 349.3; *TMW* V: 3.1; 5.5; 12.6; 13.6; 14.7; 15.9; 30.6; 37; 50.1; 68.9f; 227.9f; 238.7; 242.3; 264.4; 281.4; 300.3; 314.7; 317.8; 323.3; 355f; 371.5; 373.5; 374.4; 376.4; *TMW* VI: 7.7; 12; 19.5; 39.1; 47f; 86.6; 100f; 108.1; 289.9; *TMW* VII: 30.2; 51.1; 98.9f; 147.5; 154.6; 233.7; 239.7; 330.5; 402.8.

<sup>88</sup> *TMW* II: 590.7—September 1830. “On the Epiphany of our Lord Jesus Christ; and the Gathering of His Elect.” TWC. The case is wrong here and should probably read: *ἁπάντησιν* (I Thess. 4:17).

an ecclesiology positing the ultimate failure and judgment of the majority. God's deliverance of a tiny remnant before the invading armies of Vespasian, typically represented, and thus necessitated, the doctrine of the rapture. Under the premillennial system, history, Scripture, the church, and Christology, and other "lesser" doctrines, each take on a new form, distinct from any other in church history, and all projected from the expectations of their premillennial ideal.

All this arises from the foundational premises of the Albury Circle. The progressive nature of revelation, the prophetic nature of the Bible, the literal-typical hermeneutic, and a specific philosophy of history determined their approach to theology and Scripture and rendered their systematic program all but inevitable. Its self-fulfilling character affirmed its validity that in turn locked the Circle into a system and perspective beyond which they could see nothing else. "The near approach of the crisis, which has unsolved so many difficulties, and converted so many points of belief into the certainties of fact, has also opened larger and more interesting objects of faith and hope, which allow not the mind to turn back to those lower regions, which it passed through. . . ."<sup>89</sup> The study of prophecy, in the eyes of *The Morning Watch*, has afforded a unifying means of approaching faith, Scripture, the church and the world. Albury began with an all-encompassing worldview. Their creative genius lay in putting that worldview into a systematic whole from which every historic event and ecclesial dogma might be interpreted, ordered, and applied. It is, in a sense, theology's unified field theory, a proto-foundationalism that offered certitude of faith. Yet, here lay its vulnerability. Attempting to restore and defend the ancient faith of the church, the Circle instead created a system by which that faith was essentially redefined. What had begun as a rational or objective demonstration of faith became an article of that faith and then its ultimate content. The object of saving faith came to be understood as the entire premillennial system, without which nothing in their time could be accurately or truly understood. This, they held, was warranted by their very nature of their dispensation and the immediacy of the last days. Perilous times called for unique faith—"We believe a time is near at hand when salvation will be decided before the hour of death. . . . The knowledge of doctrine

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<sup>89</sup> *TMW* III:8.3— March 1831. "The Prophetic Aspect of the Church." John Tudor.

*-Chapter Four-*  
Doctrines Through the Premillennial Forge

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which in ordinary times suffices for saving faith, will not suffice to save in times like these, which will require knowledge of every kind.”<sup>90</sup> What the Circle failed to see was the fact, that with this affirmation, the content of theology and the message of the Gospel had been transformed.

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<sup>90</sup> *TMW* I:542.7—December 1829.

# Chapter Five

## The Church With Her Endowment of Holiness and Power

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**"The Religious World has been recommending,  
and holding, prayer meetings for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.  
How did it expect this prayer was to be granted?"**<sup>1</sup>



### 1. Good News and Controversies

The summer of 1830 brought news the Albury Circle recognized as the single greatest affirmation of their adventist hopes. Accounts reached London of an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Scotland through which God had wrought miraculous healings and restored the spiritual gifts of the early church. For the Albury Circle, this was nothing less than incontrovertible evidence of the imminence of the Second Advent, the validation of their message, and a sign of God's final mercy as an apostate church was called to repentance through signs and wonders. News of events in Scotland came as to men at war. Virulent criticism, from popular print to the increasing threat of heresy trials, had engulfed *The Morning Watch* and its contributors, embroiling them in ever-deeper controversy. Through it all, the men of *The Morning Watch* remained resolutely consistent to the course they had chosen. Increasingly defensive before the mounting hostility, yet ever more hopeful before the power of God poured out upon his faithful, the men of the *Watch* continued to interpret everything through the lens of the premillennial worldview. For nothing, they held, was occurring that had not been foreseen in Scripture and prefigured in time.

## 2. The Shaping Principles of Albury's Pneumatology

In the early 1820s, James Haldane Stewart gathered a small group to pray for a general outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In 1826 Stewart published what became a widely disseminated and influential tract<sup>2</sup> announcing that only an unprecedented outpouring of the Holy Spirit could empower the church to address the problems and needs of their time. Edward Irving was among those gathered for prayer. But in spite of profoundly advanced pneumatology *and* a belief that the last days would see a second, and greater Pentecost, the magnitude and course of events would take even Irving by surprise.

The Albury Circle's pneumatology received its shape from two diverse and conflicting sources, the first being their own premillennial expectations, and the second being a series of sermons on Baptism preached by Edward Irving at the newly opened National Scotch Church on Regent Square.<sup>3</sup> While this is the reverse of the actual chronological order, it is crucial that this priority, and the precedence of the premillennial system, be maintained, if one is to properly understand the pneumatology conveyed in the pages of *The Morning Watch*. While Irving's baptism sermons form a doctrinal starting point and were not without influence, they never functioned as the defining parameter by which Irving and his circle shaped and interpreted the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Rather, it was his premillennial system and corresponding hermeneutic that formed the contours of his pneumatology, both theoretical and practical, as the last days outpouring splashed first upon Scotland and then Regent Square. To do otherwise would be to misunderstand Albury's intent and field of vision. The Circle's pneumatology—as with their Christology and every other doctrinal perspective—was not only shaped by their premillennial expectations, they were interpreted almost wholly as elements of this reality and made vehicles by which the prophetic message was conveyed. Having already concluded the nature, role, and work of the Spirit in the next dispensation, Irving and

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<sup>1</sup> *TMW* II: 188.3—March 1830.

<sup>2</sup> James Haldane Stewart, *The Cause and Remedy for National Distress*, (London: 1826).

<sup>3</sup> The overflow crowds at Irving's Caledonian Chapel necessitated the erecting of a new building. The cornerstone of the church was placed on the first of July 1824 and the building was complete three years later with the first service occurring on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> May, 1827 with Thomas Chalmers preaching. For a helpful history of the church, see John Hair, *Regent Square: Eighty Years of a London Congregation* (London: J. Nisbet & Co., 1898).

*-Chapter Five-*  
**The Church With Her Endowment of Holiness & Power**

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the men of *The Morning Watch* set themselves to demonstrate how the present manifestations fulfilled the prophetic word, validated the nature and message of Scripture, confirmed the veracity of their approach and work, and anticipated the millennial kingdom. Events in Scotland were not interpreted so much as shaped to convey conclusions already reached through prophetic speculation and the premillennial system.

For all this, the sermons on baptism are not without influence. In the second of these, entitled *The Sealing Virtue of Baptism*, Irving gave an exposition of the text "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38-39). Dividing the passage into two portions, Irving dealt first with the concepts of repentance and the remission of sins and then turned his attention to interpreting "the gift of the Holy Ghost."<sup>4</sup> In this sermon Irving criticized traditional interpretations for their limiting the Spirit's work to "the inward gift of sanctification and fruitfulness," while ignoring "the outward gift of power."

Four essential points stand out in this sermon that will become elements of Albury's pneumatology. First, Irving rejected the commonly accepted cessationist position, holding instead that the gifts of the Holy Spirit were irrevocably given by God to the church. Second, their absence reflected a lack of faith within the church and God's judgment upon it, a fact evidenced by God's giving to every age a witness to his gifting the church with the ability to do signs and wonders.<sup>5</sup> Third, Irving's understanding of the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts is linked to his Christology and Trinitarian theology, yet in details that remain inconsistent and paradoxical. Finally, and most importantly, the restoration of the gifts were intrinsically bound to the millennial kingdom as tempo-

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<sup>4</sup> Edward Irving, "The Sealing Virtue of Baptism," Homily II. Homilies on Baptism. *Collected Writings*, vol. II, ed. The Rev. G. Carlyle (London, 1864), 270-88.



-Chapter Five-  
The Church With Her Endowment of Holiness & Power

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ral and spatial reality and defined by Albury's premillennial ideal. This led the circle to expect the full restoration of the gifts as an inalienable component of the created world in its next dispensation.

It was to be three years however before Irving's theology of the Holy Spirit, theoretically set forth in the sermons on Baptism, would receive further attention. From 1827 to 1830 Irving was instead committed to "the full preaching of Christ's coming in our flesh, and his coming again in glory."<sup>6</sup> Certainly these two "great truths," received the greatest attention within the pages of *The Morning Watch* through its first six issues (March 1829-June 1830),<sup>7</sup> during which time Albury's primary interest and energy were focused to defining their imminent adventism and defending the doctrine of Christ's human nature. It was not until the summer of 1830 that word reached London of extraordinary events occurring in the west of Scotland and Irving and the Circle turned to consider afresh the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>5</sup> See the article "Abuse of Spiritual Gifts" (*TMW* IV:375-402, anonymous), which gives numerous accounts of those whose lives have been affected by visions and other manifestations of the Holy Spirit. Examples of tongues and other spiritual gifts in history are noted among *Les Trembleurs des Cevennes*, the Jansenists, and others, all in effort to show that "the Lord has never left off striving with his church" (391.3) and that the gifts, though abused and quenched by the church, have never been completely removed. This article contains a great deal of criticism of pastors who are unable to believe, discern, or manage the spiritual gifts and states "the real misuse of the gifts of the Holy Spirit arises not so much from vanity on the part of those who possess them, as from the slight put upon them by others, especially by the elders and ministers of churches." This perspective put *The Morning Watch* in a dangerous position as it absolved, by definition, the errors of their own zeal while condemning, without appeal, any who criticized their understanding and use of the gifts of power.

<sup>6</sup> Edward Irving, "Facts Connected with Recent Manifestations of Spiritual Gifts", *Frasers Magazine*, January 1832, p.755. This article is mentioned and briefly reviewed in an article surveying twelve recent works on spiritual gifts (*TMW* VII:186-207—March 1833).

<sup>7</sup> It is almost impossible to break the articles of *The Morning Watch* into simple categories. Christological issues appear in passing through many articles and hardly a single article occurs that does not, in some way, reflect or express Albury's premillennialism. Nevertheless, of 79 articles appearing in the first six issues at least 42 deal specifically with the Second Advent and 7 address Christological issues. The remaining contributions, usually of relative brevity, address general theological issues, book and sermon reviews, and correspondence.

### 3. The Last Day's Pentecost Begins

#### a) *Expectations of a Last Day's Pentecost*

For all the effect events in Scotland bore upon the perspective of Irving, the Albury Circle, and *The Morning Watch*, the restoration of the gifts of the Holy Spirit had long been expected and already made a part of Albury's premillennial doctrine. Through the first half of 1830, passing references are made to the gifts of power as the details of the coming cataclysm were choreographed and explained. Irving interpreted Joel's prophecy of a last days outpouring of the Spirit, as a certain and literal promise that the gifts of the Spirit would be a part of the millennial kingdom and may even precede its full manifestation.<sup>8</sup> More frequent during this period, are the laments raised for the church's lack of spiritual power and the excoriating rebuke it is given for its rejection of its spiritual birthright. "When we remember what the dispensation of the Spirit is, it is enough to make us tremble to see how little we have used the gift."<sup>9</sup> As early as the journal's second issue (June 1829) Irving expressed

the conviction which is strongly brought to my own mind, that the church ought to look upon her nakedness of spiritual gifts, as a token of her want of faithfulness, as a punishment of God for her unbelief and unrighteousness; not the original constitution in which she was placed, and in which, if she had trusted in the name of Immanuel, she would have continued till this day.<sup>10</sup>

Not only were the gifts an expected part of Christ's establishing his reign on earth, they were seen, at even this early date, as a necessary element of ministry in the last days and the uniquely spiritual requirements for the church under the seventh vial. "We would now invoke the church to stir up all the faith which is in her, to pray fervently for its increase, and for the energizing influence of the Holy Spirit, to fit her for the work of labour and endurance which awaits her; which will prove, we believe, more arduous and severe than that of the Apostles' time."<sup>11</sup> But while miracles and unique signs were anticipated, the outpouring of the Spirit was expected, prior to June of 1830, to bring

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<sup>8</sup> *TMW* II:302.2—June 1830.

<sup>9</sup> *TMW* II:363.3—June 1830.

<sup>10</sup> *TMW* I:163.8—June 1829. "Old Testament Prophecies Quoted in the New, II." Edward Irving. This is the first significant statement of the church's lack of spiritual gifts in *The Morning Watch*, appearing thirteen months before the Circle became aware of events in Scotland. See also: II:234.1

<sup>11</sup> *TMW* II:234.3—June 1830. "Jesus of Nazareth, The King of Glory." Anonymous.

more a change of magnitude than type. The Last Days' outpouring, as theoretically set forth in *The Morning Watch*, was not initially expected to take the form of glossolalia or an overtly miraculous addition to the preached Word. While these concepts and emphases would come later, the Albury Circle initially envisioned an outpouring that would occur in essentially "normal" terms, as God anointed preachers to powerfully open the Bible's prophetic truth to the congregation. Granted, this would be unprecedented, paling the Pentecost of the apostolic church before its power and intensity. Nevertheless, it was not so much a new act, as one more powerful and deep, foreseen by the Circle. And there could hardly have been a more expectant or watchful group. The ground had been prepared with all the fullness of premillennial expectation and events in Port Glasgow found fertile soil in which to take root.

#### *b) The Spirit Comes in Power: Events in Port Glasgow*

In May of 1828, Irving used the opportunity of the Church of Scotland's annual General Assembly to take the message of the premillennial advent to Scotland. Arriving in Edinburgh, he announced that he would be giving twelve, early morning, lectures on the Apocalypse. The first of these met at St. Andrew's Church, one of the largest in the city. But Irving's fame and the pride Scotland felt for his success in London—not to mention the subject matter—produced overflow crowds. Even Chalmers was turned away from the first lecture.<sup>12</sup> The lectures were then moved to St. Cuthbert's, the city's largest church where again Irving was received with attentive and overflowing crowds. Chalmers here succeeded in gaining entry to the lectures but confessed "I scarcely understood a single word, nor do I comprehend the ground on which he goes in his violent allegorizations, chiefly of the Old Testament." Mrs. Oliphant suggests the public felt otherwise: "Whether Chalmers' conclusion was shared by the Edinburgh public seems very doubtful; for to the last, that public, not over-excitable, crowded its streets in the early dawn...and his wonderful popularity was higher at the conclusion than at the beginning"<sup>13</sup> This preaching tour is arguably the high-water mark of Irving's career, as

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<sup>12</sup> Oliphant, *The Life of Edward Irving*, p. 229. Mrs. Oliphant quotes Chalmers: "Irving is drawing prodigious crowds. We attempted this morning to force our way into St. Andrew's Church; but it was all in vain."

-Chapter Five-  
The Church With Her Endowment of Holiness & Power

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~~gunning~~<sup>13</sup> This ~~preaching tour is arguably the high water mark of Irving's career,~~ as he stood before huge and receptive crowds enraptured with prophetic interest. Untainted at this time by either the Christological controversies or later scandals surrounding the manifestations of the Holy Spirit Irving was received in Scotland as a hero.

From Edinburgh, Irving went west, speaking in Glasgow and elsewhere to large and receptive crowds.<sup>14</sup> It was here that Irving met Alexander J. Scott and gained further opportunity with John McLeod Campbell, minister at Row, whom he had met only weeks before. Unknown to any of the three, their relationship and mutual influence would have far reaching affect on Scotland, London, and each of them personally. Alexander Scott, described by Irving as "possessing the strongest faculty for pure theology I ever met with,"<sup>15</sup> was subsequently called by Irving to come to London as his assistant. Scott, as a ministry candidate, frequently preached for Campbell and Robert Story, minister in Rosneath, friend of Irving, and member of the first Albury Prophecy Conference. McLeod Campbell was soon to face heresy trials for his rejection of the doctrine of limited atonement and his views came to influence Irving at this time and find increasing articulation in *The Morning Watch*.<sup>16</sup> The relationship of these three men conjoined several distinct theological perspectives: first, from Irving, came the message of the imminent Second Advent and a Christology that maintained the full deity and full humanity of Christ. Second, from Irving and Scott together, came the message that the Spirit's gifts of power would be restored and should be prayerfully sought. And third, from McLeod Campbell, came a rejection of rigid Calvinism and its doctrine of a limited atonement. Each man was influential on the other and almost certainly their combined teaching percolated through the churches surrounding the Clyde.

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<sup>13</sup> Oliphant, *The Life of Edward Irving*, p. 230f.

<sup>14</sup> Dallimore, *Life*, pp. 87-89. A. L. Drummond, *Irving*, pp. 29, 115.

<sup>15</sup> John Hair, *Regent Square*, p. 86.

<sup>16</sup> Arnold Dallimore, *The Life of Edward Irving*, p. 87. Dallimore's description of McLeod Campbell is simplistic and misleading: "His message was essentially 'God loves you', and he held that the minister's task lay chiefly in convincing men and women that they were forgiven and teaching them to realize and enjoy the Fatherhood of God." Better descriptions may be found in Thomas F. Torrance, *Scottish Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), pp. 287-317 and James B. Torrance, "The Contribution Of McLeod Campbell to Scottish Theology", *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 26.3, Edinburgh, 1973, pp. 295-310.

This is evidenced in a series of conversions occurring around Port Glasgow and Gare Loch in the spring of 1828. A young ship builder named James Macdonald, during a time of personal prayer, received a conversion experience.<sup>17</sup> Several weeks later his brother George underwent a similar experience.<sup>18</sup> Though untrained in formal theology, their biographer catalogued five doctrinal conclusions the brothers had reached through their own study of Scripture.<sup>19</sup> The first two of these, dealing with assurance of salvation and God's universal love, were closely linked to the theology of McLeod Campbell, while the last three—the humanity of Christ, his premillennial advent and kingdom, and non-cessationist doctrine of charismata—were central tenets of Irving's theology. The doctrinal lines were quite discernible and the Macdonald brothers were in time perniciously labeled as disciples of Irving and McLeod Campbell and therefore guilty of double heresy.<sup>20</sup>

Alexander Scott joined Irving already possessing a strong belief that the Spirit's gifts of power had never been withdrawn from the church but had disappeared due to the church's lack of faith. Irving agreed but held at this time that their restoration would not occur this side of God's instituting the millennial Kingdom. Scott disagreed and sought for two years to convince Irving that such gifts were the rightful possession of the church, as fully available to them as to the apostles.<sup>21</sup> Irving apparently remained unconvinced, later describing that Scott

used often to signify to me his conviction that the spiritual gifts ought still to be exercised in the church; that we are at liberty, and indeed bound to pray for them, as being

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<sup>17</sup> Robert Norton, M. D. *Memoirs of James and George Macdonald of Port-Glasgow* (Dundee: Shaw, 1840), p. 51.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60. Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology of Edward Irving*, (p. 62) uncritically accepts Norton's statement that the MacDonald brothers had built their doctrine solely from their own reading of the Bible. I believe this is naïve, for three reasons: first, Irving and McLeod Campbell were well known in that area which had proven particularly open to fresh theological ideas. Strachan affirms "Irving's views were well known in the neighbourhood because of his recent preaching tour and Campbell's word had 'leavened all that land.'" Second, the detail and wording of their five points are so closely related to both McLeod Campbell and Irving as to make the influence almost impossible to deny. And third, it was extremely common at that time to add validity to one's theology by denying all outside influences and claiming the Scripture alone as the source.

<sup>20</sup> Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology of Edward Irving*, p. 63

<sup>21</sup> Edward Irving, "Facts Connected with Recent Manifestations of Spiritual Gifts", *Fraser's Magazine*, January 1832, p. 756. It is significant that Scott is actually closer to the theology of Irving's baptism sermons than Irving himself who, as we have seen, has shaped his pneumatology around a millennial center.

-Chapter Five-  
The Church With Her Endowment of Holiness & Power

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baptized into the assurance of the 'gift of the Holy Ghost', as well as of 'repentance and remission of sins' (Acts, 2:38). When I used on these occasions, to propose to him my difficulty, lest for our father's transgressions we should have been adjudged to the loss of our inheritance until our redeemer should come, he never failed to make answer, that though we were baptized into the one body, the Church, we were called to act thereon upon our several responsibilities as persons; that the promise is to every believer personally, who, receiving of the same, do by their several gifts constitute the body and membership of the Church. Though I could make no answer to this, and it is all together unanswerable, I continued still very little moved to seek myself or to stir up my people to seek these spiritual treasures.<sup>22</sup>

Scott, more "certain than ever in his conviction that the gifts of the Holy Ghost would be restored, and that speedily,"<sup>23</sup> traveled in the fall of 1829 to his father's manse in Greenock. There he had opportunity to speak with a young woman named Mary Campbell of Fernecarry on Gare Loch, endeavouring to convince her of the distinction between the Spirit's work of regeneration and actual "baptism by the Holy Ghost." Unable to persuade her, Scott exhorted her to read the Acts of the Apostles, in order to determine if what he said was not indeed true. Ultimately, it was not Acts but the gospel of John that changed her mind. She became convinced that if Jesus, possessing an identical human nature as ours, had done signs and wonders by the power of the Spirit, then all believers possessing the same Spirit have available the very same power.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of January 1830 she wrote Irving, expressing her thoughts and excitement over the implications of this discovery. From this point Mary Campbell, with others, began to pray for the restoration of the gifts. On Sunday 28 March, with rapidly deteriorating health, and on her sick bed, Mary Campbell, her sister and a friend spent the day in prayer and meditation. That evening, as Irving describes the events, several others had come up

to the sick chamber of their sister, who was laid on a sofa, and, along with one or two others of the household, they were engaged in prayer together. When, in the midst of their devotion, the Holy Ghost came with mighty power upon the sick woman as she lay in her weakness, and constrained her to speak at great length, and with superhuman strength, in an unknown tongue, to the astonishment of all who heard, and to her own great edifications and enjoyment in God.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Edward Irving, *Frasers Magazine*, January 1832, p. 757. It is unclear why, in the Fall of 1829, Scott "was more certain than ever."

<sup>24</sup> Edward Irving, *Frasers Magazine*, January 1832, p. 759f.

Across the Clyde at Port Glasgow the Macdonald family also came under the power of the Holy Ghost. Margaret, desperately ill herself and bound for a week to her sick bed, suddenly announced, "there will be a mighty baptism of the Spirit this day," and then "broke forth in a most marvellous setting forth of the wonderful works of God, and as if her own weakness had been altogether lost in the strength of the Holy Ghost, continued with little or no intermission for two or three hours, in mingled praise, prayer and adoration."<sup>25</sup> Early that evening Margaret prayed that James might be endowed with the power of the Holy Ghost. Almost immediately he responded, "I have got it." He then walked to a window and after looking out for several moments turned to Margaret, and "addressed her in those words of the twentieth Psalm, 'arise and stand upright.' He repeated the words, took her by the hand, and she arose; then we all quietly sat down and took our dinner."<sup>26</sup> After the meal, James wrote to Mary Campbell, commanding her in the name of the Lord to arise from her bed and be healed. This letter and its account of Margaret's healing, had a deep impact upon Mary Campbell.

I had scarcely read the first page when I became quite overpowered, and laid it aside for a few minutes; but I had no rest in my mind until I took it up again, and began to read. As I read every word came home with power, and when I came to the command to arise, it came home with a power which no words can describe; it was felt to be indeed the voice of Christ; it was such a voice as could not be resisted; a mighty power was instantaneously exerted upon me: I felt as if I had been lifted from off the earth, and all my diseases taken from off me at the voice of Christ. I was verily made in a moment to stand upon my feet, leap and walk, sing and rejoice.<sup>27</sup>

On Friday 18<sup>th</sup> April 1830 George Macdonald spoke in tongues, followed by James. The next night both men again spoke in tongues and also interpreted the words to those gathered. News of these events swept the region. Mary Campbell, spending the summer of 1830 in Helensburgh, was made the focal point of innumerable meetings convened to study, examine, and seek the gifts that had begun to fall. "Merchants, divinity students, writers to the Signet, advocates" and "gentlemen who rank high in society" came from Edinburgh,<sup>28</sup> to determine for themselves the source and meaning of the gifts.

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<sup>25</sup> Robert Norton, *Memoirs*, p. 107f.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 107ff.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* p. 110.

<sup>28</sup> A. Robertson, *A Vindication of "the Religion of the Land" from Misrepresentation; and an exposure of the Absurd Pretensions of the Gareloch Enthusiasts* (Edinburgh: W. Whyte & Co., 1830), p. 311

-Chapter Five-  
The Church With Her Endowment of Holiness & Power

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Dr. Chalmers, eager for news, received from The Rev. Robert Story the affirmation, "I am persuaded you will be prepared to conclude that these things are of God and not of men."<sup>29</sup> The Macdonalds too were overrun by pilgrims and the curious, with one of the sisters announcing, "ever since Margaret was raised and the gift of tongues given, the house has been filled every day with people from all parts of England, Scotland and Ireland."<sup>30</sup>

In light of Albury's expectations, it was hardly surprising that news of events in Scotland brought an immediate response from the Circle. On the last day of the final Albury Prophetic Conference, in July of 1830, the Circle agreed

that it is our duty to pray for the revival of the gifts manifested in the primitive Church,—healing, miracles, prophecy, kinds of tongues and interpretations of tongues and that a responsibility lies on us to enquire into the state of those gifts said to be now present in the west of Scotland.<sup>31</sup>

Like many others, the Circle dispatched emissaries to investigate these events. Irving himself kept abreast of the situation through friends in Scotland and pilgrims from his own church, reporting that "many of the most spiritual members of my flock"<sup>32</sup> had gone to Scotland to inquire after the truth and details of God's outpoured Spirit. In August an independent party of six, all from the Church of England, save for its leader, John Cardale, a London attorney, left for Scotland.<sup>33</sup> The group spent three weeks around Port Glasgow, attending numerous prayer meetings in which the gifts were in full manifestation. In October a meeting was held with members of the Albury Circle to consider their findings. Cardale explained what he had seen, testifying that he believed the utterances to be completely by the power of God and free of personal "expression,"

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<sup>29</sup> R. H. Story, *The Memoir of the Life of the Rev. Robert Story* (Cambridge, 1832), pp. 209-11. It should be noted that Story later changed his mind and expressed his concerns to Mary Campbell regarding her excitable nature and desire for attention. See pp. 214-217. See also A. L. Drummond, *Irving*, pp. 146ff.

<sup>30</sup> Quoted in A. L. Drummond, *Irving*, p. 142.

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in A. L. Drummond, *Irving*, p. 135.

<sup>32</sup> Edward Irving, *Frasers Magazine*, January 1832, p. 756.

<sup>33</sup> According to the Dictionary of National Biography, James Bate Cardale succeeded his Father as head of the law firm Cardale, Liffé & Russell, Solicitors to Rugby and Gray's Inn. Cardale was accompanied on this trip by his wife and sister, Edward Oliver Taplin, the Rev. Robert Norton, and Dr. J Campbell. Cardale would later become the "Pillar of the Apostles," Taplin the "Pillar of the Prophets" in the Catholic Apostolic Church, while Norton became the biographer of the MacDonalds and theologian/apologist for the new church, writing *Reasons for Believing That the Lord has Restored to the Church Apostles and Prophets* (London: Bosworth, 1852).



"conception," or "intention." "I had," he testified, "numerous opportunities of observing a variety of effects confirmatory of this."<sup>34</sup> Their report, consistent with Albury's premillennial expectations, was received with approval and the Circle turned towards disseminating the news in *The Morning Watch*. The spark struck by Stewart's prayer meetings and tracts had burst into flame with events in Scotland. News of the healing of Elizabeth Fancourt, daughter of an Anglican Clergyman in London, on the 20<sup>th</sup> of October 1830<sup>35</sup> only increased the waxing sense of expectancy, and prayer meetings sprang into being across London and beyond.

### c) Pentecost Comes to London

Irving's struggle regarding the Holy Spirit's gifts of power was not *if* but *when* they would be restored. Irving's doctrine, conformed by premillennial parameters, held this outpouring would not occur until after the millennial kingdom of Christ had been established. But events in Port Glasgow and Gare Loch had convinced Irving that the gifts of power, elements of the millennial kingdom, had been restored in *preparation* of the kingdom's coming. "If, therefore, the period be not actually arrived, it is at least fast approaching, when it will be necessary for the Holy Ghost to make himself manifest to God's children by visible sights, as it was in the first age of Christianity."<sup>36</sup> It took little time for *The Morning Watch* to begin publishing articles propagating and interpreting the news of the second Pentecost: the September and December issues each bore two articles, solely addressing recent events, the Holy Spirit, and spiritual gifts.<sup>37</sup> The Second Advent appeared ever nearer to the men of the *Watch* as the theoretical outpouring of the Spirit began to manifest. Through the next winter the Circle dedicated themselves to

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<sup>34</sup> *TMW* II:869-73—December 1830. "On the Extraordinary Manifestations in Port Glasgow." J. B. Cardale.

<sup>35</sup> Accounts of this healing and others may be found at *TMW* III:138-160. "Miracles, Signs, and Powers. Anonymous. For accounts outside *The Morning Watch* see *The Christian Observer*, 1830, p. 708 and R. Norton, *The Restoration of the Apostles and Prophets* (London: Bosworth, 1861), pp. 44-5. For a more skeptical approach see Edward Miller, *The History and Doctrines of Irvingism* (London, 1863), pp. 62-63.

<sup>36</sup> *TMW* II:621.8—September 1830. "The Outpouring of the Holy Spirit." Anonymous.

<sup>37</sup> (1) "The Outpouring of the Holy Spirit", II:608-22—September 1830, Anonymous. (2) "The Church with Her Endowment of Holiness and Power", II:630-63—September 1830, Edward Irving. (3) "On the Gifts of the Holy Spirit Commonly Called Supernatural", II:850-69—December 1830, Edward Irving. (4) "On the Extraordinary Manifestations in Port Glasgow", II:869-874—December 1830, John Cardale.

theological reflection, endeavouring to integrate these events into the larger scheme of their premillennial system and the pursuit of God's last days outpouring.

Albury's growing hope was tempered by anxieties raised by issues coming before the General Assembly in May of 1831. John McLeod Campbell, A. J. Scott, and Hugh Maclean, each suspected of heresy, were scheduled to come before the Assembly. Campbell, having raised the ire of traditional Calvinists, was the only one of the three under charges of heresy. Scott and Maclean were due to be examined with regard to taking a new call, the former to the Kirk at Woolwich and the latter to the parish of Dreghorn, Ayrshire. But both were held suspect. In a sense, Irving too was on trial. He shared Campbell's rejection of limited atonement and both Scott and Maclean were under scrutiny for holding dubious doctrines regarding the Lord's human nature learnt from Irving.<sup>38</sup> Further, as a member of the Albury Circle, the allegations raised against Maclean suggests the Church of Scotland was suspicious of the whole premillennial enterprise. The General Assembly marks the beginning of official action being taken against the Albury Circle and their doctrine. In the dock were not only their friends and even a member of the Circle but its central doctrines of universal atonement, the full humanity of Christ, and the premillennial return of the Lord.

A fortnight before the General Assembly, Irving called his church to a special period of prayer. Early each morning approximately one thousand people gathered at Irving's National Scot Church on Regent Square to pray for the General Assembly and its decisions regarding his friends. Prayers beseeching God for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit and a full manifestation of the gifts also characterized these meetings. Irving described these days:

We met together about two weeks before the meeting of the General Assembly, in order to pray that the General Assembly might be guided in judgement by the Lord, the head of the Church. We cried unto the Lord for apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, anointed with the Holy Ghost the gift of Jesus, because we saw it written in God's word that these are the appointed ordinances for the edifying of the body of Jesus. We continued in prayer every morning, morning by morning, at half past six o'clock; and the Lord was not long in hearing and answering our prayer.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Irving had given the charge to the pastor at Maclean's ordination to the London Wall Church in 1827.

<sup>39</sup> *Trial of the Rev. Edward Irving, M.A. Before the London Presbytery* (London: W. Harding, 1832), p. 24.

Their prayers were perhaps encouraged by events beginning to occur in London. On 30<sup>th</sup> April, 1831 Mrs. Cardale spoke in tongues, giving three sentences and then interpreting them as, "The Lord will speak to his people—the Lord hasteneth his coming—the Lord cometh."<sup>40</sup> *The Morning Watch* noted, "the first person who spoke by the Holy Spirit in London was a member of MR. Baptist Noel's congregation, in St. John's Chapel, Bedford Row."<sup>41</sup> The Rev. Noel's response was wholly negative.<sup>42</sup> He not only refused to affirm this as a work of the Spirit, he actively preached against such manifestations, causing the Cardales to eventually leave his church and join the congregation at Regent Square. Shortly after Mrs. Cardale's experience, a Miss Hall—governess to the family of Spencer Perceval, Member of Parliament and son of the former Prime Minister—also spoke in tongues. By the beginning of September 1831, at least six members of Irving's church—Mrs. Cardale, her sister-in-law, Miss Emily Cardale, Miss Hall, Mary Campbell, Edward Taplin, and Robert Baxter—had experienced glossolalia.<sup>43</sup>

Again, the Albury Circle saw themselves, not only as messengers of the last days but also instruments through which the millennial kingdom was being birthed. This created an inner tension as events came to be reported and interpreted in the pages of *The Morning Watch*. On the one hand are numerous articles reflecting careful biblical and theological reflection. Yet, juxtaposed to these, are statements and articles that portray Irving and his Circle as uniquely anointed, and above criticism. One writer, endeavouring to explain "the bare historical facts concerning the manifestation of supernatural

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<sup>40</sup> A. L. Drummond, *Irving*, p. 153. It is not insignificant that the Spirit's message reflects the expectations of the millennial revival.

<sup>41</sup> *TMW* V:185.6—March 1832. Anonymous. This article, appearing a year after the London manifestations began, sought to ally criticism by showing tongues neither began in Irving's church or were limited to that congregation but were in fact part of a broader manifestation.

<sup>42</sup> In an article entitled *Noel and Boys on Miraculous Powers* (*TMW* VI:417-29) *The Morning Watch* reviewed two current works in juxtaposition. One, by The Rev. Baptist Noel entitled *Remarks on the Revival of Miraculous Powers in the Church* (London, 1831), was sharply critical of the growing revival of signs and wonders. The other by the Rev. Thomas Boys, M. A. entitled *The Suppressed Evidence: or, Proofs of the Miraculous Faith and Experience of the Church of Christ in all Ages, from authentic Records of the Fathers, Waldenses, Hussites, Reformers, United Brethren, &c.* (London: Hamilton Adams & Co., 1832), critiques Noel's work. The reviewer expresses his frustration and confusion that while Noel's pamphlet had become quite popular and well known, Boy's book, which ably critiques its arguments, quotations, and conclusions, is largely ignored. For additional comments in *The Morning Watch* regarding "Baptist Noel" see: V:413.1 and VII:184.6.

power at the present time,"<sup>44</sup> places Irving and the Albury Circle at the center of a chain of events in which God had manifested his Spirit. This had begun with J. H. Stewart's tracts and teaching, which had called the church to pray for an outpouring of the Spirit. The manifestations themselves were the result of Irving's sermons on baptism, which were in turn taken by Mr. Scott to Scotland where they were received, and made the inspiration behind people's praying for the gifts of the Spirit. Events in Scotland were now interpreted in *The Morning Watch* as the result of Irving's ministry and influence. Irving's prayers and labours had been blessed by God who poured out the gifts of healing and tongues on Port Glasgow. The writer sarcastically calls on critics to explain how their prayers, begun with the circle gathered by Stewart, have been answered if not in the events of healing and tongues. Albury's implicit sense that they were uniquely anointed made any real objectivity on their part illusionary and led increasingly to explicit contradictions between their theory and its practical application.

#### 4. The Church With Her Endowment of Holiness and Power

##### a) *Interpreting the Last Days Pentecost*

The gifts of the Spirit, as they appeared in Scotland and then around London were interpreted through *The Morning Watch* in purely millennial terms.

It was the opinion of the elder commentators on the Apocalypse, that the Spirit of prophecy would be restored in the latter days, against Antichrist. Many persons in modern times have been expecting a further fulfilment [sic] of the prophecy of Joel; and there are several analogies which connect the beginning with the end of this dispensation in a very remarkable manner.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> *The Times* reported on these manifestations on 19 Oct.; 15, 21, and 28 Nov.; and 22 and 26 Dec. 1831.

<sup>44</sup> *TMW* IV:469.2—December 1831.

<sup>45</sup> *TMW* V:138.5—March 1832. Some of these "analogies" are explained in the pages that follow this quote.

*-Chapter Five-*  
**The Church With Her Endowment of Holiness & Power**

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Albury's literal-typical hermeneutic saw the prophecy of Joel<sup>46</sup> as typically, but not ultimately, fulfilled in Pentecost of Acts two. The literal reading of the verse, especially when understood within the larger context of the national restoration of Israel, led the Circle to conclude that the passage was in no way to be limited to the day of Pentecost<sup>47</sup> but awaited a future, yet fuller manifestation. Albury's hermeneutic again forms the basis of interpreting both Scripture and experience as a single line of promise, anti-typical fulfillment, and ultimate hope traced through time to give the Circle unique and pressing revelation for their last day's ministry.

The Christological controversies and the Circle's labours to discern and articulate the role of the Holy Spirit in the earthly ministry of Jesus, led them to begin their interpretation from a Trinitarian and Christological dimension in their interpreting events in Scotland. Irving explained:

This in dwelling of Christ, and therefore presence of Christ with his church and people at all times, flows necessarily from the nature of the Trinity. Where the Holy Ghost is, there is God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. If the Holy Ghost be in us, the Father and the Son are in us *by the Spirit*. This according to the eternal relations of the three God-

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<sup>46</sup> Joel 2:28-31 "Then afterward I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. <sup>29</sup> Even on the male and female slaves, in those days, I will pour out my spirit. <sup>30</sup> I will show portents in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. <sup>31</sup> The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes."

<sup>47</sup> *TMW* VII:341.5. For other examples of the use of Joel's prophecy, see: II:302.2; IV:80.9, 87.3, 339.9f, 397.8, 470, 472.2, 473.3; V:138.5, 148.6; VII:257.2, 259.9, 363.7, 372.5. It is noted (VII:341.5) that the prophecy of Joel is not limited to the day of Pentecost. The prophecy of Joel chapter two, especially verses 28f became an important part of the journal's work and is cited often. Joel's prophecy is specifically used to defend the practice of allowing women, under the power of the Spirit, to speak in church (III:491.3 and IV:339.9f). Albury's use of Joel 2 is almost identical to that of early Pentecostalism of the next century. See for example D. Wesley Myland, *The Latter Rain Covenant and Pentecostal Power* (Chicago: Evangel Publishing House, 1910) and D. William Faupel, *The Everlasting Gospel*, especially pp. 32ff.

-Chapter Five-  
The Church With Her Endowment of Holiness & Power

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Persons revealed to us, is strictly thus: The Holy Ghost is in us as the Spirit of Christ...<sup>48</sup>

Irving's clearly Trinitarian perspective, including an understanding of the perichoresis mature for his day, reflects the fact that Albury began their approach to the Holy Spirit on solid ground. The will of the Father occurs through the person of the Son by the operation of the Spirit. Jesus, during the period of his earthly ministry, lived his life of obedience, sinlessness, and faithfulness to God, not by the power of his divinity, but by the power of the Holy Spirit within him. In this, he was the example, or in the words of *The Morning Watch*, the "prototype" of humanity under the full conditions of the fall, yet fully alive and obedient to God. Irving's insistence upon the strict maintenance of the full humanity of Jesus allowed a profound understanding of the work of the Spirit and thus the larger perspective of the Trinity.

The doctrine of Christ, particularly the Spirit's work in the life of Jesus, gave real (though partial) definition to Irving's understanding gifts of the Spirit made available to believers in every age: "My idea of the church is derived from its name, 'the body of Christ;' and of its endowment from the words following, 'the fulness of Him that filleth all in all' (Eph. i. 23.)"<sup>49</sup> As Jesus lived on earth, not under the power of his divinity but under the power of the Holy Spirit, so the church was expected to receive the endowment of the Spirit and thus live in holiness and obedience before God. Irving saw a direct correlation between the gifts of the Holy Spirit and preaching, placing the emphasis of the Spirit's gifts "not on an appeal to blind power," but in the resurrected Jesus who "confirms the truth preached, by giving sign of his possessing" power over sin and

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<sup>48</sup> III:342.2—June 1831. "Jesus the Head Over All Things." R. B. The perichoresis was an integral part of Albury's Trinitarian theology. See for example: "It is necessary to bear in mind the nature and eternal relations of the Trinity in this examination. . . . In the Son 'dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;' as it is said above, 'A body hast thou prepared for me.' So that whatever God the Father will to do, it is done in the person of the Son, through the operation of the Holy Ghost. The Father is God together with the Son and the Holy Ghost; and the same may be said of the Son and of the Holy Ghost relatively to the other God-Persons; but the Father is no otherwise God. We must carefully guard ourselves against the idea that the Father, the Son, or the Holy Ghost does any act by his own Person alone"(III:340.5). See also II:437.8; III:340.7; IV:339.5. It is also worth comparing these statements with the Cappadocians. For example, from Gregory of Nyssa: "We do not learn that the Father does something on his own, in which the Son does not cooperate. Or again, that the Son acts on his own without the Spirit. Rather does every operation which extends from God to creation and is designated according to our differing conceptions of it have its origins in the Father, proceed through the Son, and reach its completion in the Holy Spirit" (*On Not Three Gods*, *Christology of the Later Fathers*, vol. III, Philadelphia: Westminster Press MCMLIV, p. 261).

*-Chapter Five-*  
**The Church With Her Endowment of Holiness & Power**

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disease.<sup>50</sup> This is consistent with Irving's Christology: as the Holy Spirit confirmed the truth of Jesus' words through signs and wonders, so believers in any age, possessing not only the same human flesh, but the same Holy Spirit, are enabled to proclaim the good news in their time, not only in word, but in power. "The body of Christ ought to have continued to do upon the earth all that the Head did during the three years of his sojourn in humiliation."<sup>51</sup> Irving held that

Christ came to do the Father's will in our condition, that we in the like case might be assured of power and ability through him to do the same. He was the prototype of a perfect and holy man under the conditions of the fall, that we, under those conditions, might know there was power and will in God that we all be perfect and holy.<sup>52</sup>

Irving tenaciously defended the doctrine that Christ took fallen human flesh, holding it was a necessary element of faith and essential to proper understanding of the work of the Spirit. For only in allowing the Spirit to work in one's life in the same way he worked in Jesus' could the church rise to the level of faith God promised and demanded.

In this faith no one can follow who refuseth to believe that Christ had all our temptations, of the flesh, as the world and the devil—all our temptations, not abating one. This is the only ground upon which we can hope to do one good work, or keep one commandment of our God; namely, that by Christ holiness was wrought in our flesh in spite of all the trials with which we are beset. And the same truth is a sufficient ground for a life of holiness, and for a holy church; and though both in the fleshly Jewish church, and the spiritual Christian church, God hath encountered as yet only defeat and disappointment, I believe that in the one and in the other he will exhibit, on this side of death, the triumph of the work of Christ over all the power of the enemy; and vindicate the work of Christ in our flesh against all men who with one consent have set themselves in array against it. . . .<sup>53</sup>

Here Irving's Christology, the sermons on baptism, the premillennial hope, and the last days' outpouring are fused. The Christological controversies that engulfed Irving and the Circle are not peripheral, but touch issues at the heart of the faith. To hold that Christ had taken sinless or pre-fallen flesh was to create an insuperable distinction be-

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<sup>48</sup> *TMW* II:630.5—September 1830.

<sup>50</sup> *TMW* II:648.8—September 1830. "The Church with Her Endowment of Holiness and Power." Edward Irving. This is certainly consistent with the New Testament: Mk. 2:8-12; I Thess. 1:5; Rom. 15:18-20; Heb. 2:3-4.

<sup>51</sup> *TMW* IV:400.6—December 1831.

<sup>52</sup> *TMW* II:663.5—September 1830.

<sup>53</sup> *TMW* V:312.5—June 1832. "An Interpretation of the Fourteenth Chapter of the Apocalypse." Edward Irving.

*-Chapter Five-*  
**The Church With Her Endowment of Holiness & Power**

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tween his life and that of any believer and render irrelevant the work and aim of the Holy Spirit. The holiness of both the individual and church depended wholly upon the Spirit's actual overcoming real human flesh and creating in it a life of holiness after the example of Christ. The failure to comprehend and experience this, in both the Jewish and Gentile "churches," had led them to miss the very blessing for which they had been prepared. But a new hope had risen, one consistent with God's past work and aim while new and characteristic of the millennial age. The revival of spiritual gifts had led to an idea Irving had never before dreamed possible, that of a "pure and holy church," established on earth before the rapture: "We would not dared to hope to see the church exalted thus, until the Holy Ghost, came amongst us."<sup>54</sup> The effect of the gifts was to confirm the Circle's view that the Scriptures were to be understood literally; to limit the church's purity and power to an eschatological reality only, was to make the same error as spiritualizing the promises made to the Jews and denying any literal fulfillment.<sup>55</sup> The purity and holiness of the church rests on Irving's Christological pneumatology and the gifts manifesting around them proved the theory through its literal fulfillment in their day. Irving's Christology and pneumatology were inseparably bound to his premillennial system by which they were fully understood. Deny the full humanity of Jesus and there is no need for the Spirit. Deny the works of the Spirit and there is no millennium. And to deny the millennial kingdom was nothing less than apostasy as biblical promises, God's saving work, and revealed intent were together shunned and replaced by the skeptical spirit of the anti-Christian age. From the first, Irving's Christology, the gifts, and the millennial kingdom would be inseparably bound and interpreted together.

And how much the church has now forgotten either to know or to seek the glory of the name of Christ, is in few things to be more distinctly seen than in her utter ignorance of the work of faith with power. Of the manifestation of the Spirit (φανέρωσις) she knoweth neither the experience nor the profit withal; of its relation to the Lordship of Christ she does not know any thing; and she cannot do so until she know something of that Lordship itself. For she conceives of it as a mere exhibition of Divine authority, and not as an acquisition by the Man of Sorrows, at once the fruit and the reward of his faith.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> *TMW* V:314.8.

<sup>55</sup> *TMW* V:312.2.

<sup>56</sup> *TMW* IV:34.9—September 1831. "Commentary on the Seven Apocalyptic Epistles—Sardis." "Fidus." Cf. IV:39.9.



*-Chapter Five-*  
**The Church With Her Endowment of Holiness & Power**

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Having thoroughly rejected any cessationist doctrine, and succeeded in bringing the manifestations within the necessary Christological and Trinitarian parameters, the Circle now attempted to extol and explain their practical use to the church. "There is no ground for denying that the promises and gifts which were given to the first Christians are our inheritance also; and, believing that this subject is ill understood among Christians at the present day, we deem it serviceable to the church to bring the question under its consideration."<sup>57</sup>

Irving's theoretical view that preaching would be among the first and most important focal points of the Spirit's work was affirmed: "the second end which we here discover for these gifts being in the church, is, that they might serve as God's own witness to the words which the ministers of his Son declare."<sup>58</sup> Irving declared the

power in the Holy Spirit, which the Prophet Micah declareth himself to have possessed of, is that with which every minister of the Word under the Holy Ghost ought to be endowed: and in the consciousness of having received that gift he asks for license to preach the Gospel; and in the fullness of that power he goes forth to preach it.<sup>59</sup>

Such anointed preaching was understood to be the sole means of cutting through the fog of error, prejudice, and self-interest that Irving believed characterized the pulpits of his day. While this anointing is occasionally interpreted to suggest an almost inerrant quality to the sermon and preacher, protecting him from wrong and untruth,<sup>60</sup> there is generally, a far more balanced perspective. Irving warned that miracles in themselves do not prove doctrine or truth: "Therefore I say, that the circumstances of a man's doing miracles, or having done miracles, doth not seal upon every word he speaketh as truth,

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<sup>57</sup> *TMW* II: 609.3—September 1830. "The Outpouring of the Holy Spirit." Anonymous.

<sup>58</sup> *TMW* II:865.8—December 1830. Edward Irving. The "first end" for the gifts being in the church is "to construct for God, a place to dwell in" through the Spirit's creation and indwelling of believers (II:851.7).

<sup>59</sup> *TMW* II: 556.3—September 1830. "Interpretation of All the Old Testament Prophecies Quoted in the New, Interpretation VII." Edward Irving.

<sup>60</sup> *TMW* II:557.

-Chapter Five-  
The Church With Her Endowment of Holiness & Power

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even though these miracles be done in the name of Christ, and by the power of God.”<sup>61</sup> He affirmed also that the Spirit’s anointing of power was not for the creation of new doctrine or ecclesial innovation. Again, at this date, the Circle perceived the second Pentecost as adding to the intensity of the church’s message and not its content. They had no desire to create new doctrine, but saw in the gifts of the Spirit, as in their millennial doctrine, a fresh articulation and now verification of the gospel once and for all delivered to the saints.

As tongues were the principal manifestation, contributors to *The Morning Watch* took great effort to explain their purpose and use. First, the gift was intended to tighten the inner relationship between believer and God. Tongues “ought especially to be occupied in secret actings of the soul towards God; and in public only as subsidiary to the work of prophesying.”<sup>62</sup> Second, tongues were interpreted as part of God’s judgment on “the wisdom of both Jew and Greek, the philosophy of the schools and the traditions of the elders, and the whole accumulation of ancient lore, which had entrained men’s mind to the creature, and the attainments of the creature, and turned it away from God.”<sup>63</sup> This will unfold in the coming years, to become a full-blown distrust and renunciation of reason and science, as incompatible with faith. Third, tongues are “the standing sign of [God’s] presence in the church”<sup>64</sup> and a sign specifically intended to convince unbelievers of God’s presence and reality.

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<sup>61</sup> *TMW* II: 642.6—September 1830. “The Church with Her Endowment.” Cf.: “Power super-human alone doth not avouch God, but merely an agent of some kind stronger than man” (II:866.8). At this early stage, Irving and the Circle were careful to keep the gifts of the Spirit subordinate to their larger understanding of the Gospel. Not only must the manifestations be consistent with biblical and systematic parameters, the “goodness and mercy of the works” which accompanied them were needed to discern if power is from God. All this would change later as miracles and the Spirit’s testimony through the prophets were uncritically received as infallible evidence of their doctrine and ministry, and, conversely, the apostasy of the larger church that lacked and denounced all such work of God through the Spirit.

<sup>62</sup> *TMW* III:485.5—June 1831. “On the Gifts of the Holy Ghost, Commonly Called Supernatural.” Edward Irving. Cf. 479.6 and 486.4 where Irving will mention “the folly and unprofitableness of using these gifts of tongues in the meetings of the church, in the way of convincing those who doubt, or altogether disbelieve that God spake by them.” Irving is explicit on this page that tongues are not to be used aloud in public without an interpreter, a perspective that will later be abandoned.

<sup>63</sup> *TMW* III:479.9f—June 1831. Also: “It appears, therefore, that the words drawn out of this prophecy and applied by the Apostle to the gift of tongues, are part of a dispensation of judgment upon the pride of intellect and the glory of learning, which cannot find God” (*TMW* III:477.3).

<sup>64</sup> *TMW* IV:91.3—September 1831. See also IV:88.6 and IV:93.7.

This now yieldeth to us the proper use of tongues, in respect to those who heard them, not having yet believed the Gospel. They were for a sign to the unbelievers; as it was delivered by our Lord after his ascension, 'These signs shall follow them that believe. . . they shall speak with new tongues.' Of what was it a sign? It was the sign of the Holy Ghost dwelling in the person who spake. When the Holy Ghost was given on the day of Pentecost, the sign of his presence in the persons on whom he had fallen was their speaking with tongues the wonderful works of God (Acts. ii.). . . Beyond all question therefore, speaking with tongues was the sign of the Holy Ghost in the person who so spake.<sup>65</sup>

Irving and the Circle, like classic Pentecostalism they foreshadowed, saw tongues as evidence of a unique and uncommon anointing, distinguishing them from the church of the spiritually déclassé. Already elitist and exclusionist in their premillennialism and the belief that they possessed above all others, a fuller revelation of God, tongues and other manifestations only deepened their conclusions. For the unbelievers Albury had in mind, were generally not those outside of the church and faith, but those within, who refused to believe premillennial realities of which tongues were the undeniable evidence. Spiritual gifts were a sign of a far greater and inevitable reality intended for the church. In the eyes of the Circle, "the sturdy rejection of miracles, as too high a gift for the church of our day (a gift even the Jewish church and the seventy disciples possessed), necessarily infers the rejection of far higher endowments, the peculiar privileges of the Christian church,—the more excellent way, superadded thereto."<sup>66</sup> The gifts, as elements of the millennial kingdom, could only be renounced by those who were blind to, or enemies of, the very goal of the Christian faith. "In our opinion, [the gifts] are the sum and substance of a church; the *sine qua non* of its existence for any one purpose for which a church was constituted."<sup>67</sup> Tongues became the dividing line within a two-tiered spirituality, thus making the sign of God's presence, dialectically, a sign "of judgment."<sup>68</sup> For with the manifestation of tongues, prophecy, and healing, a separation occurred between those endowed with or believing in the gifts and those who denounced or denied

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<sup>65</sup> *TMW* IV:482.5—June 1831. "On the Gifts of the Holy Ghost, Commonly Called Supernatural," pp. IV:473-496 (continued from II:869). Edward Irving. This premise cannot be long held before the gift evolves into proof of doctrine and evidence of verity.

<sup>66</sup> *TMW* III:139.7—March 1831. "Miracles, Signs, and Powers." Anonymous.

<sup>67</sup> *TMW* V:409.6—June 1832. See Also III:138.5 and III:142.2. At III:200f the gifts are described as the first drops of the seventh vial poured upon the church which has "disgracefully slept at its post for a long time past." The gifts are described in dialectical terms, providing a last merciful call and a sign of judgment in the one word.

<sup>68</sup> On the relationship between spiritual gifts and judgment, see also IV:402.1; V:324.9f, and V:337.7.

their reality, meaning, or necessity. Judgment had already begun as the gifts distinguished between those who grasped the very essence and intention of the faith from those captive to antichrist and the spirit of the age.

The manifestations of the Holy Spirit in Scotland confirmed a point made in Irving's sermons on baptism: the work of the Holy Spirit was not to be limited to sanctification. Indeed, Irving seeks to separate the work of the Holy Spirit from sanctification, holding that perfect holiness, interpreted here as "the positive and absolute dismissal of all sin,"<sup>69</sup> comes with our baptism. What is given with the Spirit is the power to possess and use in this dispensation, as first fruits, a reality of the one to come.

Those passages of Scripture, therefore, which speak of a gift of the Spirit which is only the first-fruits of something greater and better, cannot, must not, be referred to regeneration and sanctification, but to that power of government and authority entered into by Christ when he passed out of the world unto the Father; whereof it is expedient and economical that a part only should be possessed and exhibited by the church during this our mortal state.<sup>70</sup>

### *b) The Gifts of the Spirit and a Docetic Christology*

The manifestation of the gifts became increasingly important to the Albury Circle and found considerable coverage in the pages of *The Morning Watch* from the summer of 1830. But the outpouring of the Spirit brought no significant change to the essential perspective articulated from the first issue of the journal. Events at Port Glasgow had led Irving to adjust his understanding of the timing of the gifts and expand his understanding as to their purpose in the dispensation of the Gentiles, but his basic theology regarding their nature never wavered.<sup>71</sup> The gifts of the Holy Spirit were interpreted from within the perspective of the millennial kingdom, as elements of its temporal and spatial reality.<sup>72</sup> Irving and the Circle felt to do otherwise with the gifts of the

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<sup>69</sup> *TMW* II:635.6—September 1830. This language is more in keeping with the doctrine of justification.

<sup>70</sup> *TMW* II:636.1.

<sup>71</sup> Nowhere is Gordan Strachan's (*The Pentecostal Theology of Edward Irving*) error in ignoring Irving's millennialism more evident than here. Strachan gives the impression that Irving, once encumbered and blinded by his premillennialism, was able, in light of manifestations at Port Glasgow, to turn from it to a pentecostal theology. Nothing could be further from the facts. Through the end of *The Morning Watch* Irving consistently interpreted the gifts of the Spirit completely within the framework of premillennialism.

<sup>72</sup> *TMW* IV:214.6—September 1831.

Spirit was to fall again into the same error which they felt so characterized the church of their day. Having interpreted spiritual realities in almost wholly transcendent terms, the church had strayed into a carnal and material existence, consumed by its own wealth and position, and thereby rendering the gifts, presence, and victory of God effectively unreal. Such spiritualizing was to deny the church of their own day of all but earthly labours, religious ritual, and human achievement, well intended perhaps but ultimately divested of any real presence of God and thus vapid and impotent. Ironically, Albury believed the corrective to this materialism lay in positing a material spirituality. An important element of the premillennial aim was to make the spiritual world a very real and immanent entelechy that would concretely manifest, in profoundly temporal and spatial terms, that spiritual reality the church was created to know and demonstrate. Recent events had led Irving to see the manifestation of healing and tongues as the "first fruits" of this particular future, a sign that the imminent kingdom had actually become, in part, a present reality. Interpreting Roman 8:23, Irving concludes that the Spirit is the "first-fruits of that complete power of the Spirit which she shall possess when the body shall be redeemed from the corruption of the grave."<sup>73</sup> But Irving sees this fulfillment in very temporal and material terms, not as heaven following death, but the premillennial kingdom following the first resurrection:

In all these passages the gift of the Spirit which the church had received, and was possessed of, is set forth as an earnest or pledge of what she is to receive and possess against that day called The day of redemption, and, The redemption of the inheritance. The inheritance is the earth and the inferior creation. . . . The 'earnest' (by which it is also named) is, like the first fruits, only a part of that which is yet to be earned. . . .<sup>74</sup>

Irving's "eschatological" interest extends no further than the temporal and material order of the next dispensation. "The inheritance" promised the saints "is the earth and the inferior creation," fully redeemed. The gifts of power manifested in this dispensation are the "first fruits," or "earnest" not of heaven or truly eschatological realities, but a renewed earth in the next phase of its history. In that sense, the gifts of the Spirit are an element not of the eternal order but of the contingent, a sign not of another reality but another time belonging to this reality. "Those passages of Scripture . . . which

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<sup>73</sup> *TMW* II:634.7—September 1830.

<sup>74</sup> *TMW* II:635.3—September 1830.

speak of a gift of the Spirit” refer to the very earthly and temporal “power and government and authority entered into by Christ” and now awaiting their full manifestation with the coming of the millennium. “We see God’s great purpose of self-manifestation moving onto completion in the course of time, and perfecting itself in the new creation as its place or subject.”<sup>75</sup> The fact of new creation or the literal presence of Jesus, reigning with an immortal church for a thousand years, does not disguise the thoroughly material character of the millennial kingdom. Indeed, it accentuates it, as the gifts of the Holy Spirit are understood completely within this context. The material and temporal reality of the next dispensation find their partial manifestation in the current one. What the Spirit brings to the believer is a first fruit not of a relationship with God but of the coming kingdom, not a first taste of the eternal order, but the earth redeemed.

Yet, this materialism should not be seen as any less ideal. For regardless of the temporal reality of either the incarnation or the millennial kingdom, the actual historicity of each is immaterial as the meaning and nature of Christ is formed around the basis of an idea. The image of Christ in *The Morning Watch* is determined not from any actual historicity but as a composite, predetermined by premillennial idealism, which was then read into the incarnation, millennial reign, and even the pre-incarnate appearances of Jesus as Jehovah. Albury’s dream was an idea and every act of Christ, historic, or conjectured, past or future, was shaped to convey its reality. But in so doing, the Christ portrayed by the Circle existed primarily as the Christ-idea and thus ultimately a reflection of their own hopes, aims, and fears. In the end, the premillennial Christ-idea—as all Christ-ideas must—became nothing more than the self-confirmation and self-exaltation of a pure and faithful remnant held before those of lesser faith, insight, or spirituality, who had pitifully missed the new world rising around them.

These issues become even more evident (and influential) with the manifestation of the gifts. More central than even the fact that Christ gives spiritual gifts to the church or that these gifts suggest or reveal something of the presence or will of God, is another larger ideal behind. The gifts represent or foreshadow the norm of the millennial kingdom, when Christ, dwelling among humanity as Jehovah, demonstrates the fullness of

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<sup>75</sup> *TMW* IV:143.6—September 1831.

*-Chapter Five-*  
**The Church With Her Endowment of Holiness & Power**

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his glory. Possessing the fullness of God, he will reign with his glorified saints who in the millennial dispensation possess a new eternal and spiritual character. The gifts, while explicitly described as signs of God's presence or evidence of his judgment, are implicitly—and dominantly—signs of the believer's own exaltation to, and participation in, an anticipated ideal. In the end, the miracles, like Christology, take on a Docetic dimension as they are defined around a teleological systematic theology and the premillennial idealism from which it is drawn.

This is consistent with Albury's hermeneutic, with its inherent philosophy of history and doctrine of progressive revelation. Miracles, as with all of God's acts of revelation, occur across time, their full meaning and implications being discerned only through the aggregation of the parts, arranged after the premillennial ideal. Albury concluded that

Miracles fall into three classes—those before Christ, those in the days of his flesh, and those since his ascension. The first bear witness to the invisible God the Creator and Governor of all things: the second, to the invisible God coming from heaven into the visible; made flesh and dwelling amongst us: The third, to the exaltation of the human nature in the Man Christ Jesus to the sovereignty of all things in the heavens whence he came forth, as in the earth where he himself did these mighty works in person, and where Holy Spirit people, through faith in his Almighty name, still do the same. The miracles themselves are the same in the three cases, but the doctrines they flow from and attest are different.<sup>76</sup>

The use of miracles in each dispensation is different, thus requiring a semantic shift between those occurring in Christ and those occurring through his ministers. The doctrine of dispensations has led to the separation of signs and wonders from a Christological center, as a miracle done in the dispensation of the Spirit is different in both means and meaning than that done by Jesus. Specific gifts of the Spirit too are understood from the frame of reference of premillennial dogmatics. Irving equates the "gift of prophecy, which the church are by the Apostle called upon to covet above all other gifts of the Spirit" with the word of the Old Testament prophets. In both dispensations, this gift of prophecy was used for near identical ends: to show "all men their true estate in the sight of God, and the nearness of his judgments, and the way of escape."<sup>77</sup> Healing

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<sup>76</sup> *TMW* III:147.9—March 1831. "Miracles, Signs, and Powers." Anonymous.

<sup>77</sup> *TMW* II:653.3—September 1830.

too was understood not in terms of an eternal reality, but millennial, as the reality of one dispensation manifested in an earlier one. In this are exhibited two of Albury's cornerstone doctrines: the material continuity of time through the dispensations culminating in an earthly and temporal kingdom and the premillennial idealism by which the character of this kingdom is determined.

But this posits a different Christology. The incarnation, if taken seriously and in a way that fully honours both the humanity and deity of Jesus, will require a concept of time that makes sharp (dialectical) distinctions between history and eternity, the progression of created time and "God's time." To put it another way, and looking at the issue from the opposite perspective: where an "eschatology" turns from this dialectic to become instead the culmination of a single history, lineally and continuously progressing through our time and the next, there is accompanying this an automatic restatement of the incarnation and thus Christology. One cannot separate Christology from "eschatology," regardless of the shape that eschatology may assume. Eschatology reflects one's Christology for it exists always as a Christological derivation, as it anticipates the return of the very one who "became flesh and dwelt among us."

From this we gain a deeper understanding of Albury's "other," more prepotent, Christology. In fact, the Christology implied in their adventist teleology contradicts that which they explicitly sought to define and defend. The solidly Chalcedonian Christology passionately and intelligently articulated through the journal, is held in isolation from their systematic theology, and is effectively replaced by another Christology, more subtle and tacit to be sure, yet nevertheless derived from and consistent with their premillennial expectations. In this more ascendant Christology, the historical figure of Christ becomes essentially inapposite, being replaced by the glorified, fully revealed Christ through whom his saints, also glorified, have unmediated access to God. Thus the gift of tongues "demonstrates in one word, that spiritual communion is wholly independent of the operations of the mind and of the body, which serve only to convey them outwardly to others, but are not necessary for communicating with God and Christ."<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> *TMW* V:80.1—March 1832. Anonymous. This description of the Spirit's bestowal of gifts is notably similar to the Spirit's work in the inspiration of Scripture. See ch. 2.



-Chapter Five-  
The Church With Her Endowment of Holiness & Power

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The manifestation of spiritual gifts in the believer reflects Albury's idealistic Christology. That which is most human, the body and the mind, are increasingly irrelevant as one moves, ever deeper, into "spiritual communion" with God.

Albury's idealism is further seen in the relationship that the last day's outpouring was seen to bear vis-à-vis the early church and Pentecost. While using the apostolic church as a standard and example,<sup>79</sup> Albury in no way was seeking to restore the church of their day to a lost primitivism.<sup>80</sup> Consistent with their hermeneutic, the outpouring of the Spirit in Acts, announced by the Apostle Peter as a fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, was seen by Albury as but a partial satisfaction and typological prefiguring of yet greater realities. The last days were expected to manifest an antitypical outpouring of the Spirit surpassing that of Pentecost, while typically prefiguring the millennial kingdom where alone the idea found ultimate consummation.<sup>81</sup>

If this were a time for restoration, re-constitution, and construction of any thing, we should anticipate that the Lord was about to restore his gifts to his church in order to re-establish churches upon the Apostolic model. But since this is a time of earthquakes and overthrowing of all things, we can only look upon the return of the gifts as a witness for God, as the last pleadings of His love, and as the last means of drawing the little flock to Himself, and of justifying before all men the destruction of the rest.<sup>82</sup>

Albury had no more real interest in the history of the early church than they did the historicity of Jesus. The manifestations of Christ and gifts, in time, were merely partial visions of an idealistic whole. This idea exists as the defining reality behind their every act, word, interpretation, and doctrine, and the nineteenth century premillennialism developed by the Albury Circle and disseminated in *The Morning Watch*, exists as its systematic articulation. The gifts of the Holy Spirit, with every historical event and biblical verse, were seen as fragmentary projections of a future whole, and were thus combined to reflect the singular reality of the premillennial worldview.

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<sup>79</sup> For example, *TMW* IV:37.5; 398.3; V:132.3; 409.3; VI:150.1; 265.5.

<sup>80</sup> Albury actually believed the restoration of Apostolic Christianity occurred with the Reformation (*TMW* III:456.6 and 457.3).

<sup>81</sup> *TMW* VI:38.6—September 1832.

<sup>82</sup> *TMW* V:143.5—March 1832.

*-Chapter Five-*  
**The Church With Her Endowment of Holiness & Power**

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In summarizing the Circle's understanding of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as it stood at the end of 1831, several points stand out. First, their doctrine is *not completely* separated from a solid Trinitarian and Christological center. The work of God in the Spirit is at times carefully correlated to the single work of the triune God and reflects or reveals God's nature. Second, this "good" theology extended to practical elements in handling the gifts. Irving and the Circle were well aware, of the potential dangers in what they presented to the church. They warned that the miracles, tongues, and prophecies were not for the purpose of gaining extra-biblical revelation. They knew too of the dangers of pride which could turn the gifts into that which destroys both the church and the gifted alike: "Now to exercise and fulfill this purpose the constant presence of charity is necessary; otherwise the precious talent rusts and corrodes its possessor."<sup>83</sup> Third, Albury's interpretation of the manifestations of the Holy Spirit and developing pneumatology, as we have seen repeatedly, became all but completely defined by their premillennial doctrine. As events and thought progressed, the theory and practical applications of their pneumatology became isolated from their incarnational Christology, both doctrinally and pragmatically. This led to their interpreting the events in Scotland and Regent Square according to the parameters predetermined by their premillennial presuppositions. This in turn produced ever more subjective interpretations and the establishing of the very thing they expressly sought to avoid. Tongues and prophecy led to both new doctrine and further segregation from the larger church, as they were made proof of the premillennial worldview. Albury's approach to the gifts, as with their Christology, was determined by premillennial idealism. It was not the historic, but millennial Christ who disclosed the fuller nature and intent of God and the corresponding role of the church. In the eyes of the Circle, these events and their elaboration in *The Morning Watch* served only to demonstrate the validity of their all-encompassing system. What went unnoticed by the Circle was the growing evidence that this system, in bringing all things under its aegis, was changing the very nature and center of their Christian doctrine.

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<sup>83</sup> *TMW* II:645.7—September 1830.

**5. Signs of the Times:  
Miracles before a Faithless Church**

***a) The Growing Crisis***

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the new understanding of the church's endowment of holiness and power, led the Circle to ever more critical assessments of the larger church. The cessationist doctrine generally held by the Protestant church and "especially of the Evangelical sect" was viewed by Irving as the "fearfullest sign" of its failure and apostasy.<sup>84</sup> The rejection of the Spirit confirmed Albury's suspicions. The Spirit represented a foretaste or "first fruits" of the coming millennial kingdom and the church's rejection of the one revealed their apathy and antagonism toward the other. Additionally, God's dwelling place with his people, begun uniquely with the giving of the Spirit, again a foretaste of the coming dispensation, was rejected and denied. The failure of the larger church to accept the premillennial message and turn from the naïve optimism that had abated ministry to Bible societies and tracts, was all the more evident in its rejection of the Spirit's power. The church's response to both confirmed the prophetic word and the Circle's certainty that the greater part of the church was incorrigibly apostate.

***b) Campbell, Maclean, and Scott versus  
the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland***

Irving had called the Regent Square church together for prayer on the eve of the General Assembly, beseeching God for an outpouring of his Holy Spirit and interceding for his friends as they stood before the Assembly. If the first of these requests was answered beyond all expectation, the second could hardly have gone worse. To Irving's horror the General Assembly decided against his colleagues: John Mcleod Campbell was

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<sup>84</sup> *TMW*:II: 643.1—September 1830. For similar assessments, see III:138.5; 142.2; IV:25.2; 34.9; 40.9; 42.9; 378.2.

found guilty of heresy and deprived of his cure at Rhu,<sup>85</sup> McLean was ordered to stand before the judgment of his Presbytery where he was disposed, and Alexander Scott's license to preach was removed.<sup>86</sup> Even more painful were the injunctions regarding Irving: this assembly gave the first direct authoritative censure of Irving, instructing any presbytery in Scotland in which Irving might try to preach, to put him on trial for heresy regarding "the sinful substance of Christ."<sup>87</sup>

Irving himself referred to these actions as a "trial"<sup>88</sup> and expressed his feeling regarding this decision in the next edition of *The Morning Watch*:

Finally, there was a decision, finding my book, entitled "The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of our Lord's Humanity," chargeable with Bourignonism, upon the mere report of a committee, without any propositions exhibited or argued, or any hearing of the author, delay, or dealing of any kind whatsoever; and branding me the author of that book, as a broacher of heresies; and warning all the ministers of the church against me accordingly.<sup>89</sup>

Several pages later, Irving summarizes:

In this case I do find in one hour my character destroyed (so far as they can do it), my book condemned, the liberty and dignity of my office taken away, myself branded, without either indictment, knowledge of my accuser, power of answering for myself, trial, or any thing which pertaineth to honour, justice, conscience, or charity.<sup>90</sup>

But the implications of the actions taken by the 1831 General Assembly went well beyond Irving's pain. Albury's methodology, from its earliest days, had drawn revelation from historical events, past and present. The outbreak of tongues within his congregation, together with decisions of the Assembly, were likewise perceived as revelatory.

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<sup>85</sup> *The Morning Watch* reported to its readers that "The Assembly was almost unanimous in casting out Mr. Campbell: it came to its decision at six o'clock in the morning by a majority of 119 to 6" (IV:191.6—September 1831). Campbell continued a successful ministry to an independent congregation in Glasgow from 1833 to 1859.

<sup>86</sup> Scott nevertheless continued to preach at Woolwich for a period. Eventually he became Professor of English Literature at Owens College, Manchester, from 1851 until his death in 1866.

<sup>87</sup> A. L. Drummond, *Irving*, p. 120. Drummond adds: "This censure was passed by the Assembly, though there were two other motions, one more severe, the other a contemptuous appeal for toleration (on the ground that these works were not calculated to influence any well-informed mind.)"

<sup>88</sup> *TMW* V:89.4—March 1832. "A Judgment—As to what course the Ministers and people of the church of Scotland should Take in Consequence of the Decisions of the Last General Assembly" (V:84-115). Edward Irving.

<sup>89</sup> *TMW* V:85.3—March 1832. See II:139.5 for Irving's view of Antonia Bourignon (1616-80) a Flemish "enthusiast" who saw herself as "the woman clothed with the sun" (Rev. 12). A sect that had accepted her designation, flourished in Scotland in the early eighteenth century.

<sup>90</sup> *TMW* V:89.4—March 1832.

With the gifts, judgment had fallen upon Christendom, hardening the faithless in their apostasy even as it brought to the faithful a confirmation of their call, integrity, and place in the last day's events. In the journal's first issue Irving explained it is the purpose and prophecy of God that the church should contain both children of the wicked one and children of the Kingdom.<sup>91</sup> The former of these would increase in number, power, and bitterness as history moves towards the Second Advent. Persecution of the church will come most potently from this apostate majority, from false brethren rather than those outside the church. Irving viewed the decisions of the Assembly as the most ungodly and evil in Scottish church history: "For never till now were the three persons of the Godhead struck at in the very heart of their being and offices."<sup>92</sup> The Church of Scotland had, in these judgments, denied the nature of God (he is love), the humanity of Christ, the work of the Spirit, and the centrality of the Scriptures to define doctrine.<sup>93</sup>

The Church of Scotland, previously trusted and loved, was now identified with the last day's apostasy and Babylon. From this point on, Irving would view his mother church with sorrow and disdain, writing: "truly the Church of Scotland without the truth is but the synagogue of Satan."<sup>94</sup> The prophecies were unfolding exactly as anticipated, and the faithful remnant, hidden within apostate Christendom, suffered under the persecution of the larger body. But if this brought pain to Irving and the Circle, it also quickened their resolve to remain faithful to the end.

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<sup>91</sup> *TMW* I:100-115. "Summary of On the Doctrine and Manifestation and Character of the Antichristian Apostasy." Edward Irving. The difference between 1829 and 1831 was one of detail not principle. In the early days of the journal the Antichristian apostasy and persecuting Christendom was seen to be Rome. In the wake of the 1831 Assembly the Circle had no difficulty in transferring referents even as they maintained the essence of the concept. Later issues of the journal increasingly transfer their identification of antichrist nomenclature from Rome to apostate Protestantism that they had concluded was typified by Rome and ultimately far more evil. For examples of this later identification see: V:97.5, VI: 330.7, VII:184.1.

<sup>92</sup> *TMW* V:95.9—March 1832.

<sup>93</sup> *TMW* V:84-115—March 1832. "A Judgment—As to what course the Ministers and people of the Church of Scotland should Take in Consequence of the Decisions of the Last General Assembly." Edward Irving.

<sup>94</sup> *TMW* V:93.2-March 1832. Irving. Such statements suggest Sandeen is right in suspecting the Scottish church purged Irving not because of any real heresy, but because he had become odious to them (Sandeen, *Roots*, p. 29, footnote 49). Coleridge, too, felt Irving had been unfairly condemned: "Perhaps the kirk would not have been justified in over looking the exhibitions of the Spirit...disgraceful breaches of decorum; but to excommunicate him on account of his language about Christ's body was very foolish; his apparent meaning, such as it is, is orthodox" (Quoted in A. L. Drummond, *Irving*, p. 221).

*-Chapter Five-*  
**The Church With Her Endowment of Holiness & Power**

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All who are clear-sighted and honest in Scotland will array themselves against the heretical body; but as this body will retain the mass of the people with it, so will it be indifferent whether it retain truth or not. . . . Never will bodies of men be otherwise than on the wrong side, and never will they learn that the flock of Jesus is a 'little flock;' and that, wherever there are two parties on any religious question, the most numerous wants one characteristic of the true party of Christ—namely, that it is the 'little flock.'<sup>95</sup>

The breach was effectively made, never to be restored. Attempts to revive the church had failed; if more grievously than Albury had hoped, it was no less a failure than the prophecies foresaw. "My own [heart] is well-nigh broken, and I am in great heaviness while I write these words. Which to me have become realities, and are written from the memoir of the heart, not from the prediction and anticipation of the sure word of prophecy."<sup>96</sup>

The apostasy of Rome was now seen as a type of a far more horrific fall, as English Protestantism rejected God's last day's revelation, the word of his prophets, and the Scriptures. The circle began to see themselves less in terms of prophets within a godly but fallen church, and more as the true church itself, encircled by the forces of antichrist. The summer of 1830 had affirmed their deepest hopes as the Latter Rain was poured upon the church as second Pentecost revealed God's last merciful call to the nations. A year later, with Irving under indictment and the gifts maligned, the prophets of Albury turned again to the prophetic word and the hope it gave all who would believe and endure till the end.

The philosophers smiled, and pointed in derision to the march of the mind, and the progress of liberty. The Evangelical clergy sneered at judgments and referred with self-congratulation to the spread of Bibles, tracts, and preachers. Once more The PROPHETS cry, and warn men to turn from these lying vanities.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> *TMW* IV:193.5—September 1831.

<sup>96</sup> *TMW* IV:310.9—December 1831.

<sup>97</sup> *TMW* II:842.3—March 1831. "The Duty of Prophets," pp. 834-42. Anonymous.

# Chapter Six

## Heresy And Holiness

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**"The party which was foremost in Scotland in bringing in the Papists into our Protestant legislature is also the most violent against the meek and lowly followers of the lamb, whom it is menacing to drive out of the church, and, as far as in it lies, to reduce them to starvation. Should the presence of God in the distinct Personality of the Holy Ghost go on to be displayed in his people, a persecution as hot as ever that set on foot by Nero will be fomented by the doctors of Evangelicalism."**<sup>1</sup>



### 1. The Ark of God in the Temple of Dagon— Mr. Irving's Church and the London Presbytery

During the first three years of *The Morning Watch* one breathes the air of a passionate and optimistic apocalypticism.<sup>2</sup> True, they saw their world poised under the lip of the seventh vial tipped and ready to be poured on its apostasies and evils. Still, there remained every reason for optimism. For the glories of the millennial kingdom could not be paled by the travails that would accompany its nativity. Even more, as the faithful were to be raptured from the world before any tribulation, its worst horrors were subjectively irrelevant—being utterly missed by the faithful, and fully deserved by those upon whom they fell. The Albury prophets had a call, a message, and a hope different than any previously known. They had a church to win and the early volumes of the journal conveyed a belief that this would indeed occur and soon. Theirs was a joy, a hope, and a passion intrinsic to their belief that they had been called and empowered to shape the church for the last and greatest event in its history, to prepare a pure and spotless bride ready to meet her bridegroom.

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<sup>1</sup> *TMW* II:898.2—December 1830.

<sup>2</sup> While "apocalyptic optimism" may seem a contradiction of terms, it remains a relatively common characteristic of premillennialism. See for example Alex Heard, *Apocalypse Pretty Soon* (New York: Norton & Co., 1999), especially ch. 2 "The Sunny Side of the End," pp. 63-103.

This changed however, as the sorrows of 1831-32 decocted a different essence. While the certainty of God's call and their confidence in their message never dimmed, Albury's hope that the church would turn to prophetic truth and thus rapture, life, and glory in the millennial kingdom, was leaking from a thousand wounds. If the first three years of *The Morning Watch* were marked with a hopeful passion, its final two years are characterized by a growing sense of despair. By the year 1832 the optimism of Albury's early years had largely evanesced before growing controversy, painful attrition, heresy trials, and devastating castigation from the larger church and the public sector. Under such shadows, the remaining contributors to *The Morning Watch* found their revivalist optimism dissolved to a point that could hope now only for the salvation (and vindication!) of a small and faithful remnant,<sup>3</sup> "snatched as brands from the burning."<sup>4</sup> Irving concluded that "things are now come to a crisis; the church is in the condition with which Jerusalem was in the days of Jeremiah."<sup>5</sup> Christendom, they concluded was almost universally lost to the spirit of the age. The view from Albury had changed. Theirs was no longer a headlong charge to victory. Yet neither was it a retreat. Rather, in this year, Albury regrouped and prepared for a siege, diving ever deeper into the certainty of the prophetic word, and searching ever farther for extrinsic verification of its message, all while awaiting the vindicating rescue of God and the destruction of all who had raised their voice against them. It remained only to be seen how many might heed God's final merciful call, voiced through tongues of Regent Square prophets.

In spite of this change in perspective, Albury's interpretive methodology remained inviolate. Their literal-typical hermeneutic, philosophy of history, and doctrine of progressive revelation, bound to preconceived notions of the course and character the age, all but determined the outcome their interpretations would take and the conclusions they would draw.

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<sup>3</sup> A certain egocentrism is not uncommon to groups centered upon a restorationist and/or remnant theology. See for example E. H. Broadbent, *The Pilgrim Church*, with Foreword by Dave Hunt (Grand Rapids: Gospel Folio Press, 1999 [1931]). I agree with Prof. Andrew Walker's, statement, made in private correspondence, "that once remnant theology becomes associated with 'my group,' it becomes the source of paranoia and delusion."

<sup>4</sup> *TMW* VI:330.8—December 1832. See also *TMW*:VII 75.4. Cf. Zechariah 3:2; Amos 4:11; I Cor. 3:15; Jude 1:23. In the latter issues, this phrase, in slightly different forms, becomes increasingly used.

<sup>5</sup> *TMW* V:102.4—March 1832.



*a) Edward Irving before the London Presbytery*

The issues and details surrounding Irving's alleged heresy fall into a convoluted heap of allegations, counter charges, trials, and testimonies, spread across roughly five years, so that in the end, even today, the "heresy" of Irving is often misunderstood, mis-stated, or uncritically assumed.<sup>6</sup> The charge of heresy had first been raised with regard to Irving's Christology and had led to a trial before the London Presbytery in October of 1830. With the support of the Session and Trustees of Regent Square Church, Irving renounced the authority of the presbytery and removed himself from its membership. Consequently, their guilty verdict came to nothing, even as the issues continued to plague him.<sup>7</sup> With the events surrounding the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in 1830-31, accusations of heresy expanded to include Irving's pneumatology. But it was not for this that he stood trial, in either a second trial before the London Presbytery in 1832 or before the Church of Scotland in 1833. In fact, three different issues swirled about Irving by the year 1832. The first of these trials would regard violations of the Deed of Trust of the Regent Square Church while the latter would return to Christological issues. Had tongues not occurred at Regent Square it is doubtful Irving would

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<sup>6</sup> Dallimore's description of Irving's alleged heresy (*Life*, p. 77ff) is illustrative. First, he states that at no point in Irving's "whole life did he prove himself so unable to think clearly or to use words precisely" (p.79), adding that Irving's writings on Christology are "repeatedly" filled with "contradictions." Second, Dallimore suggests he does not comprehend the subtlety or detail of Irving's argument, calling his Christology "strange" and implying it is difficult to understand. Finally, refusing to actually turn to the writings of Irving, Dallimore draws his assessment from the criticisms of The Rev. Henry Cole, Irving's chief protagonist. Dallimore could hardly be more in error. Irving's writings on the subject, at least in *The Morning Watch*, are numerous and perspicuous. Irving takes great care to explain his doctrine, showing its consistency with Scripture and the theological traditions of the church. Unfortunately, the depth of the arguments lay beyond the acuity of his protagonists who could not grasp the difference between Christ taking human, fallen flesh and being himself sinful. Ironically, for all one might find to criticize in Irving, his understanding of Christ's human nature is not one of them. Nevertheless, it is for his Christology that Irving is most frequently condemned and dismissed.

<sup>7</sup> Irving cited the Deed of Trust for the Regent Square Church as justification for renouncing the jurisdiction of the Presbytery of London and separating himself from it, as that deed required the church's minister be "duly licensed to preach the Gospel by some presbytery of the established Church of Scotland, and ordained according to the rules of that Church" (*The Trial of the Rev. Edward*, pp 1-3). Irving felt the deed made him answerable only to the Church of Scotland. In 1832, Irving's explicit violation of the statutes of this deed formed the basis of charges made against by the trustees and entertained by the London Presbytery.

ever have been put on trial, at least in London.<sup>8</sup> But with Miss Hall's prophesy in the vestry and Irving's allowing tongues in worship, long time supporters within the church rejected Irving's leadership. The London Presbytery, whose authority had previously been spurned by Irving and the Regent Square Session, became for Irving and his circle a sign of the times, as the trustees rejected the last day's outpouring of the Holy Spirit and sought the Presbytery's aid to remove Irving as pastor of the National Scot Church.

The battle was of classical lines drawn between ardor and order. On the one side were those who felt the events of the last days were ever more rapidly unfolding, evidenced by growing interest in prophecy and the outpouring of God's Spirit in a second and greater Pentecost. To renounce the gifts of tongues was to deny both the presence of God and his revelation through which such events were to be understood. Against this camp were those of a more sober perspective who were profoundly troubled by the acts of "the gifted ones" as their glossolalia and prophecies increasingly filled the sanctuary at Regent Square.

The Trustees, "being desirous of clearly ascertaining the duties and obligations imposed upon them by the trust-deed,"<sup>9</sup> first responded to the troubling events of the previous year by seeking legal advice. In January of 1832 a copy of the church's trust deed and a narrative describing recent events was given to the respected attorneys, Sir Edward Sugden and Mr. James Russell. Their advice was succinct and unequivocal: "The trustees ought immediately to proceed to remove Mr. Irving from his pastoral charge, by making complaint to the London Presbytery in the manner pointed out by the deed."<sup>10</sup>

A meeting occurred on the 20<sup>th</sup> of February between the trustees and their pastor, who was given a copy of their counsel's advice. The following week Irving re-

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<sup>8</sup> It is conceivable that Irving would have stood trial in Scotland regardless of manifestations of the Spirit. Irving was closely linked with Hugh McLean who was seen as something of a disciple of Irving's. Additionally, Irving had accepted John McLeod Campbell and Alexander Scott's belief in the universal love of God and Scott had served as his associate at Regent Square. The decision of the 1831 General Assembly against these three, coupled with already existing doubts regarding Irving's orthodoxy and exacerbated by the manifestations of the Spirit, made it all but inevitable that he would one day face trial before the Church of Scotland.

<sup>9</sup> *Trial of the Rev. Edward Irving*, p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> John Hair, *Regent Square*, p. 116.

sponded, graciously, but stubbornly informing the trustees that he disbelieved the intentions of the trust deed were meant to “fetter” him from following “the great Head and Bishop of the Church.” Had he perceived it so, he would not have bound himself to such an agreement, even “to possess all the churches of this land.”<sup>11</sup> Irving made it clear that his course would not change and the trustees would have to steer theirs accordingly. That Sunday Irving hinted to his congregation that he did not expect to remain much longer as pastor of the National Scot Church.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March the trustees unanimously elected to follow the advice of their legal counsel. Six members of the group were charged “with power to call in legal assistance to prepare the complaint, and to carry the same before the London Presbytery.”<sup>12</sup> The Presbytery expressed willingness to hear the complaint provided the trustees accept its previous ruling of 30<sup>th</sup> November 1830 and acknowledge the Presbytery’s jurisdiction and authority over Irving and the Regent Square Church. This the trustees did at a meeting on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March. The minutes of this meeting indicate their submission to Presbytery’s previous decision but give no record of debate or evidence that they had turned from Irving’s Christology.<sup>13</sup> Irving’s trial began on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> of April 1832.

The Presbytery of London convened the trial at the Scotch Church, London Wall.<sup>14</sup> Interest in the case and broad support for Irving insured the church was filled to capacity. Presbyters included the Rev. J. R. Brown who presided as moderator, the Rev. Dr. Crombie, the Rev. J. Miller, the Rev. F. McLean, and Rev. J. MacDonald and Messrs. Bernie, Marshall, and Wright, Elders. Irving was on hand, represented by J. B. Cardale, solicitor and member of Regent Square Church. Those expecting a unique spectacle were not disappointed. Immediately following the moderator’s prefatory prayer, Mr. Edward Taplin, one of the “gifted” of Regent Square and member of the

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<sup>11</sup> *Trial of the Rev. Edward Irving*, p. 6.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Trial of the Rev. Edward Irving*, p. 15. Irving’s Christology was almost certainly overshadowed by utilitarian concerns. The trustees were interested only in bringing their case before the London Presbytery and their decision appears pragmatically not theologically determined.

<sup>14</sup> Additional accounts of the trial may be found in Oliphant, *op. cit.*, Gordon Strachan, *op. cit.*, and Arnold Dallimore, *The Life of Edward Irving*.

church since 1826, rose and excoriated the Presbytery, condemning the entire proceedings in both tongues and English. Following the restoration of order, the complaint of the trustees was read with the letters that had been exchanged between Irving and themselves over the issue. The complaint contained a passing reference to Irving's earlier trial "respecting the human nature of our Lord Jesus Christ," but states the court's current intention of addressing only those matters brought to them by the trustees.<sup>15</sup> The first day consisted of the testimonies of three witnesses, Mr. Duncan McKenzie, an elder of Regent Square Church, Mr. Taplin, and Mr. David Ker, a deacon at the church.

The trial centered on issues of practice rather than doctrine.<sup>16</sup> That is not to deny Irving's attempt to make it otherwise. On the second day of the trial he gave his defense calling upon the presbytery to address the biblical teaching and premillennial doctrine that had inspired his actions. Irving's defense followed four points. Beginning with the scriptural basis for the gift of tongues, Irving endeavoured to demonstrate how events at Regent Square are precisely those to which the Scriptures speak and that his use and ordering of these gifts was in accord with the Bible's teaching. In making his defense, Irving relied upon the first portion of the tract *The Day of Pentecost*<sup>17</sup> to begin his statements, moving then to his own experience as he sought to understand, test, and manage the gifts as they were manifested at Regent Square. By the end of his defense he had spoken just over four hours.

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<sup>15</sup> *Trial of the Rev. Edward Irving*, p. 6.

<sup>16</sup> I believe Strachan, *op. cit.*, overstates the theological character of the trial: "This trial is of supreme importance because it is the most explicit record of the debate between the Reformed and Pentecostal doctrines as they are expressed in the practice and procedure of Church worship services. This trial is a definitive statement on all the issues that make Irving an important Pentecostal-Presbyterian today. His case is by no means closed." This can only be true in the narrowest sense, where judicatories reject such charismatic forms out of hand. For the issue before the Presbytery of London was not theological legitimacy or even biblical precedence, but whether or not Irving had violated the order and nature of worship as defined by the practice of the Church of Scotland. To Irving's chagrin, the Presbytery had no interest in discussing the propriety or validity of the Church of Scotland's style of worship or the purpose, implications, and use of tongues. Indeed, the trial was forbidden to stray to theology from issues of polity. It is true that Irving sought to emphasize the latter, but here, and at his trial in Annan, matters of pneumatology were considered by the court to be immaterial. In prohibiting what he felt was Irving's attempt to place Church of Scotland's understanding of Scripture on trial, the moderator made the pragmatic concerns of the Trust Deed, not theology, the point of concern. Similarly, Dallimore (*Life*, p. 145f) also errs in attributing a theological nature to the proceedings. Strachan and Dallimore, holding roughly opposite opinions on the doctrine of tongues, both read into the trial a non-existent theological emphasis to support their own doctrinal and polemical positions.

<sup>17</sup> *Trial of the Rev. Edward Irving*, p. 21.

The moderator then invited Hargreaves Mann, member of the trustees, to respond to Irving's defense. Mann expressed his offense at what Irving had said and unwillingness to respond in kind. He felt that he had proven beyond doubt that the manifestations were the results of "delusions"<sup>18</sup> and any biblical and theological defense was merely their justification. He concluded by reminding Irving that he had been present when the trust had been written, with his full agreement. If Irving could lead the church in accordance with its precepts he was welcome to stay, with the blessing of the trustees. If not, he should, for the good of the church, leave, again with the blessing and prayers of the trustees. The Presbytery adjourned until the Wednesday, the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May.

At its final session, Irving was invited by the moderator to make a final defense to the statements made by Mr. Mann. Irving again sought to explain himself in theological terms. But his defense this day shifted from the gifts to the premillennial frame of reference, holding that the actions he had taken and the manifestations themselves could only be understood in terms of an imminent advent. The question for Irving was "whether the beginning of the latter day glory shall be quenched, or whether it shall be permitted to arise in the Church of Scotland, the Church of England, and the Church of Christ?"<sup>19</sup> More fundamental than the trust deed or practices of the Church of Scotland, were the times of peril in which the church stood and the acts of God uniquely occurring within it. The decision of the Presbytery would determine their own standing in these crucial times and were therefore of the utmost gravity. To quench the Spirit of God would result in "heavy judgments of the Lord, upon all concerned in the opposition to his work, yea, upon the church itself, if the church should take part in these proceedings, and not solemnly protest against them, and wash her hands of them altogether."<sup>20</sup> The meeting was adjourned until six that evening.

Reconvening with Irving absent and preaching at Regent Square Church, the Presbytery of London found the charges in the complaint brought to them by the trustees were "fully proved." While "deploring the painful necessity thus imposed upon

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<sup>18</sup> *Trial*, p. 58.

<sup>19</sup> *Trial*, p. 65.

<sup>20</sup> *Trial*, p. 65.

them, they did, and here by do discern that the said Rev. E. Irving has rendered himself unfit to remain the minister of the National Scotch Church. . . and ought to be removed"<sup>21</sup> in accordance with the trust deed. The decision was ratified by the trustees at a meeting the following day. On Friday the 4<sup>th</sup> of May, Irving arrived at the church to find the doors locked.<sup>22</sup> That Sunday, the vast majority of the congregation celebrated Communion at a rented hall on Grays Inn Road, the nascence a body described in *The Morning Watch* as an "Apostolic church. . . set upon his holy hill of Zion."<sup>23</sup>

### b) *The Response of The Morning Watch*

It took little time before a response appeared in *The Morning Watch*. Such events were prophetically expected, and Irving had long expressed that the saints of the last days could anticipate only suffering: "Disease, and pain, and disablements of whatever kind, are parts of the captivity and thralldom [sic] into which sin hath brought flesh."<sup>24</sup> *The Morning Watch*, in assessing the situation, never flags in its praise for Edward Irving or doubts the significance of his role as the world raced towards judgment. In case the London Presbytery had forgotten with whom they were dealing, the anonymous author of "The Ark of God in the Temple of Dagon" cites Coleridge's assessment of Irving as a reminder: "The profoundest thinker of the age has characterized Mr. Irving as 'a mighty wrestler in the cause of spiritual religion and Gospel morality; in

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<sup>21</sup> *Trial*, p. 87f.

<sup>22</sup> VI:224.7-September 1832. Irving's "church which, with its angel, prophets, elders, deacons, members in full communion, and catechumens, was, as one perfect unbroken body, cast out of that part of the great Babylon called the Church of Scotland, found refuge, as our readers know, in the concert-ball-room of the infidel Owen." Author goes on to state that such a casting out of an entire congregation is without precedent in church history.

<sup>23</sup> *TMW* V:442.4-June 1832. The term is highly euphemistic and reflects a spiritual perspective and hope rather than actual opinion regarding their new situation. Mrs. Oliphant, reflecting on the building's odious association with Robert Owen, described the room as, "not only desecrated by that association, but too small to hold the large body of Irving's adherents." "Nothing could be more repugnant to the judgment, taste, and feeling of all the members, than the asylum to which they were driven. A barn or cowshed would have been preferable, but not such were to be obtained." Oliphant, p. 369.

<sup>24</sup> *TMW* IV:310.9-December 1831. Irving. "Interpretation of the Old-Testament Prophecies Quoted in the New." Cf. Honee, *Prophecy and Eschatology*, "The Radical German Reformer Thomas Muntzer," p. 71: "According to Hans-Jürgen Goertz, one aspect of Muntzer's pneumatological teaching of faith deserves special attention. Repeatedly, Muntzer tells his students that suffering is essential to the attainment of genuine, experienced faith."

whom, more than in any other contemporary, I seem to see the spirit of Luther revived."<sup>25</sup>

This article provides a brief biographical sketch of Irving, portraying him as one who had been faithful to the traditions and perspectives of his Scottish church, only to find them hollow and feckless. He had come to London, "deeply infected with the intellectual pride of his countrymen, and imagined that by setting forth the truths of Christianity in the forms of the schools, rather than in the forms of the Spirit, he might induce the philosophers and men of science to become Christians."<sup>26</sup> The plan failed in the end because the Christian faith was only received as a "science." Interestingly, the author assesses even the high point of Irving's career as something of a failure: "the church was crowded to suffocation with grandees of all classes, peers and peeresses, lawyers, metaphysicians, philosophers of every grade, and members of literary and scientific societies. During all this outward shew, however, there is no ground to believe that a single soul was effectually turned to God."<sup>27</sup> Irving's deliverance from this rational and impuissant theology under which he had been raised, ordained, and even initiated his ministry began when "Mr. Irving had the elements of the mechanical arrangement of the Apocalypse explained to him by Mr. Frere."<sup>28</sup> Tragically, in the opinion of the writer, the very truths that had liberated Irving from error had, through Irving's trial, been officially rejected and condemned by the larger church. The trial of Irving before the London Presbytery confirmed to the Circle that their age stood on the brink of both disaster and rebirth and that the prophecies were unfolding exactly as they had foreseen.

Once again, Albury's premillennial frame of reference was made the paradigmatic standard from which Irving's trial was assessed. More than merely illuminating their situation, events surrounding Irving were understood as part of the divine plan, typologically prefigured in the history of Israel, with the antitypical fulfillment functioning in their

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<sup>25</sup> *TMW* V:441.4-June 1832. Anonymous. "The Ark of God in the Temple of Dagon." The title's reference is to 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 5.

<sup>26</sup> *TMW* V:442.9f-June 1832. This quote perhaps reveals why early editions of *The Morning Watch* are more favourably inclined toward science while in later issues this changes and science is set in antithesis to the work of the Spirit.

<sup>27</sup> *TMW* V:443.2.

<sup>28</sup> *TMW* V:443.8.

own age as divine revelation. "The ark in the temple of Dagon is the type which explains what is now going on; and considerations like the above... induce us to attach more than its seeming importance to the ejection of Mr. Irving and his church, from the Church of Scotland."<sup>29</sup> The expulsion of Irving meant more than appearance might suggest. Albury's historicist/typological hermeneutic required their own tragedy to be assessed wholly in terms of the ultimate as defined by the premillennial system. The fideism inherent within the premillennial system led to the deepening of their own polemic as their position and the response of the presbytery to them were correlated to Scripture through typology and shown to be the fulfillment of the prophetic word. Thus, events surrounding Irving, the Circle, and their journal, were understood as revelatory, as prophetic promise and type temporally manifested to evidence both Scripture's veracity and the faithfulness of those who proclaimed this truth. The Christological controversies culminating in Irving's trial had shown the depth and superiority of Irving's theology even as they unveiled the error and folly of the larger church.<sup>30</sup> The manifestations of the Spirit were evident proof that the latter days outpouring of the Spirit had begun. The decisions of the General Assembly in 1831 and the presbytery's condemnation of Irving the next year, made clear that the apostasy characteristic of the gentile age was more far-reaching and sinister than any had previously imagined and had all but thoroughly engulfed the church. And all combined to affirm to the Circle that they had correctly ascertained the meaning of Scripture, the course of history, and the goal toward which all things were relentlessly progressing.

*c) "Come Out, Come Out, Of Babylon"*  
*Schism and the True Church*

From the journal's first issue, the Circle had postulated that the truly faithful would exist as a remnant within a larger apostate body and would receive from this body increasingly maleficent persecution. Nevertheless, through June of 1831, editions of the

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<sup>29</sup> *TMW* V: 442.7.



journal passionately denounced the sin of schism, and encouraged their readers to remain faithful to the larger church and bear witness to the coming revival.

Unauthorized religious societies. . . grounded upon the exaggerated view of the right of private judgment, and of the value of the written word of God, have succeeded in effacing the institution of the Christian church from this land almost as completely as if it never had had an existence. It is yet to be seen if diligently searched for; but it is found like a water-logged ship, not sea-worthy, charts and compass washed overboard, rudder unshipped, dismasted, leaking, and going down. Still, even in this wretched condition, it is our firm conviction that it is the duty of every one to stick to the wreck, and not to leave it: that if any one will leave it he cannot be saved; but that all who stick to it will, some on one plank, some on another, get safely to land at last. The Evangelical Calvinists are doing their utmost to call on men to jump overboard and save themselves, each one for himself.<sup>30</sup>

In the wake of the 1831 General Assembly, Irving called on the people to accept those who had been disciplined into their pulpits and denounce, "as wolves in sheep's clothing," any minister that participated in so scandalous a condemnation. Still, Irving and his circle did not openly call for schism, advocating instead for acts of protest and open resistance by the faithful within the church. Irving's trial before the London Presbytery and subsequent expulsion from the National Scot Church changed Albury's view of the church and transformed the rhetoric filling the pages of *The Morning Watch*. It had become the fate of the faithful at Regent Square, together with their minister, to separate from their false brethren and enter the wilderness. From this point, the contributors of the journal began to advocate schism.

The traumatic events of 1831-32 led contributors to reassess the nature of the church both for the purpose of justifying their own separation from the Church of Scotland and to prepare the larger church for an appropriate response to this ecclesial peripetia. While the church had been seen as an impure and tainted whole, it remained, nevertheless, blameless at its core and sanctified by a large, faithful, and cohesive minor-

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<sup>30</sup> *The Morning Watch* summarized the trial accordingly: "What then, was the ground on which the complainants deemed Mr. Irving unfit to continue a minister? Simply for giving place and paying reverence to that which he believed to be the voice of God, and which they did not believe: simply because He had faith, and they had none" (TMW V:450.1).

<sup>31</sup> TMW III:375.5—June 1831. "Calvinism Not the Whole of Christianity." Anonymous. Or again: "Our own principle is, that nothing can justify a continued separation from a church, and the constituting a separate society, except anti-Christianism in the spirit and character of the body from which the separation is made" (TMW III:453.1—June 1831). On schism, see also I:702, 703.6; II:277.1, 352.2, 820.5, 933.8; IV:193.5; VI:38.7, 154.2, 329.9f.

ity in its midst. This minority would ultimately succeed in bringing renewal, ensuring a large and united portion of the institution would escape the coming tribulation and reign with Christ in the millennial kingdom. But the two trials revealed that the magnitude of spiritual decay was more far reaching than previously imagined. This led contributors to postulate the church exists only in fragmented form within an all but universally apostate body. Thus, separation from this body, for the purpose of uniting the fragmented faithful, was not a schismatic but unifying act.

To separate from a body bound together by the one Spirit of Christ, was indeed to rend the body of Christ; but to separate from a parcel of people with various spirits, and only bound together by putting their hands to the same piece of paper, may be right or wrong, but has not in itself, and independent of other considerations, the smallest resemblance to the sin of schism.<sup>32</sup>

Even more, the Circle pronounced that the church, as described in the New Testament, had never actually existed, rendering "the crime of schism," an impossibility.<sup>33</sup> The contributors to the journal concluded that the institutional church was all but totally apostate, beyond redemption, and incapable of leading or caring for those in its care. Taking a course earlier denounced in the journal, *The Morning Watch* began to call upon the faithful to leave Babylon. "Let every faithful minister—and I believe, there are of such a few—silently withdraw themselves from these confederacies of iniquity, where to speak a word boldly for the truth as it is in Jesus would be to sacrifice their own standing and life as ministers, which every man is bound to take care of."<sup>34</sup> This principle was extended also to laity as Irving warned believers, "that it is not dutiful to be present at or take part in any worship of which such a minister of antichrist is the leader and the mouth."<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> *TMW* VI: 140.5—September 1832.

<sup>33</sup> *TMW* VI 138.8—September 1832.

<sup>34</sup> *TMW* VI: 449.5—December 1832. "The Responsibility of a Baptized Man, of a Preacher of the Gospel, and of a Pastor in Christ's Flock, to Christ and the Church" pp. VI:430-450. Edward Irving. Here Irving suggests that presbyteries in Scotland and bishops in England not only barely hold the truth, their greater evil lies in their "usurpation" of their jurisdiction (cf. 430.3, 447.1). Irving was painfully aware "that in a few months the whole Church of Scotland will be called upon, by those who are enemies of the truth, to strike another blow against the ordinance of Christ, in me represented."

<sup>35</sup> *TMW* V:97.5— March 1832. See also V:98.1 where Irving gives his reasons for so important a decision. See also V:99.1, V:102.6 below, and V:105.1 where Irving calls on those who are orthodox but denied ordination to leave with the people who desire them as pastor and serve in that office though not ordained.

The standing sign of orthodoxy remained the acceptance of the prophetic nature of scripture and the premillennial system, and the litmus test of this faith was found in one's response to the manifestations of the Holy Spirit. Tongues and healing were seen as the manifested essence of the millennial kingdom, proof of its imminent appearing, and thus the evidence of premillennial faith. Consequently, *The Morning Watch* began to call believers to abandon those fellowships "where the work of the Spirit, now proceeding in the church, is preached against."<sup>36</sup> Where a pastor denies the permanence and availability of the gifts of the Spirit, "it is the clear duty of all persons to withdraw from his ministry, and protest against his church as a synagogue of Satan."<sup>37</sup> Irving, a high and faithful churchman, yet devastated by the trials in Scotland and London, took a course in utter contradiction to all he had previously held. In the course of one year, from the spring of 1831 and the meeting of the General Assembly to the spring of 1832 and the judgment of the London Presbytery against him, Irving had concluded that the church was not only beyond repair, it had never actually existed as an institution. The church he had pledged to serve, and to which he had given his life and heart, he now concluded was and had ever been counterfeit, godless, and under the control of Satan. It was therefore to be abandoned by all who truly believed. Irving went so far to say that if a suitable minister could not be found the people should organize their own fellowships for worship.

As the journal reached its penultimate issue, the die was cast.

The churches are cursed. . . they are set aside; they are synagogues of Satan, and the pastors of them are ministers of Antichrist. We warned them that into this state they were fast passing. Some among them thought to wait until they saw a miracle: the Lord would be hindered no longer: He has set up His own church. There never was, nor ever can be, two churches of God's appointment at the same time on the earth: He hath ordained elders, pastors, evangelists, teachers, helps, prophets, and apostles, by His Spirit, and therefore of necessity He recognizes no other ordination for the future. . . . The reconstitution of one by the Spirit, has *ipso facto* set aside the other; and it is now our duty to call incessantly for the downfall of Babylon, the opposing city, which holds the Lord's children in captivity. Moreover, it is necessary for the evangelists to warn the people everywhere against the idea that the Holy Spirit is now merely adding a new sect

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<sup>36</sup> *TMW* VI:135-144—September 1832. "What, and Where, is the Church?" Anonymous.

<sup>37</sup> *TMW* VI:329.9f—December 1832. The next page instructs those who have left to gather for fellowship, prayer, and reading the word.

to the multitude of sects which already exist, and to proclaim that He is setting up the only church in which they can be saved.<sup>38</sup>

The larger church, here perceived as Babylon and wholly rejected by God, had been *replaced* with a new, true, and pure church.<sup>39</sup> One also notes here the concept that God will have one church at any given time. As God had once turned from the Jews, fallen in their rejection of their messiah, to the Gentile church, so now he has rejected the Gentile church that had taken the form its typical antecedent and like the Jews had fallen again to recidivism. Another sign that the gentile age had come to an end.

#### *d) Attrition at Albury and a Changing Circle*

In June of 1832 *The Morning Watch* reviewed the work *Miracles and Spiritual Gifts*; by the Rev. Hugh McNeile, A. M.<sup>40</sup> A short article of only ten pages, it is a particularly sharp review, accusing McNeile of contradictory statements, unoriginal thinking, and theological nescience regarding the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Yet the significance of the article comes neither from this harsh appraisal or its own corrective content. Nor, on the other hand, should McNeile's sermon be seen as a uniquely poignant assessment of events occurring at Regent Square that had forced a response. The article is important for one reason: the Rev. Hugh McNeile, Rector of Albury, and the moderator of at least the first of the Albury Conferences on Prophecy,<sup>41</sup> had fallen from the fold. McNeile, a believer in the prophetic element of Scripture and committed to the premillennial coming of the Lord, had stumbled over events occurring in Scotland and then Regent Square.

Yet, even here, it is not "pentecostalism" but premillennialism that is ultimately at issue. McNeile's difficulty lay not with the gifts per se, but what he felt was an errant interpretation of their place in prophecy. McNeile owed his position in the church to

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<sup>38</sup> *TMW* VII: 184.1—March 1833. "Church Reform." Anonymous. See also VI:330.7; VII:184.6.

<sup>39</sup> This, of course, is the nativity of the Catholic Apostolic Church. For a helpful history of this body, see, Columba Graham Flegg, *op. cit.*

<sup>40</sup> *TMW* V:430-440-June 1832. Anonymous. "McNeile on Spiritual Gifts."

<sup>41</sup> "McNeile...had been and active participant in the Conferences, taking the chair at many of the meetings." Flegg, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

the patronage of Henry Drummond who had heard the young Irish preacher in London and presented him to the rectory of Albury in 1822. At this time, McNeile was a committed premillennialist whose primary interest lay in the restoration of the Jews. In 1828 he wrote *The Times of the Gentiles*,<sup>42</sup> which described the role of Israel's reestablishment to the premillennial advent. Following the Circle's literal hermeneutic, McNeile held that biblical references to the "elect nation" could refer only and always to Israel. Irving and Drummond agreed, but believed such references could be typically applied to Britain. This led to profoundly different approaches to interpreting prophecy and ultimately their split. McNeile held that both the nation and church would remain, in this dispensation, corrupt and imperfect. Irving, and the remaining contributors to the journal, on the other hand, had become increasingly enamoured with the prospect that the perfections of the latter, if not the former, were an inevitable element of the end of the church age and would occur prior to the initiation of Christ's millennial reign. McNeile criticized Irving and his circle for having become

filled with admiration of the predicted holiness and beauty of the perfected church of Christ, at the second advent of her Lord, and looking at this truth alone, to the neglect of present duties arising out of other portions of holy scripture, have become impatient of human infirmity, and determined to have a holy company even now. Forgetful of what manner of spirit they are themselves, they have hastily seceded from the militant and imperfect church in which they were baptized, gone into all excesses of extravagant excitement, and denounce all who will not go with them.<sup>43</sup>

To Irving, the gifts were a sign of the millennial kingdom openly manifesting. McNeile on the other hand, though originally seeing the gifts as genuine, came to believe they had turned Irving from a proper prophetic focus on Israel, to a myopic self-centeredness.

In March of 1833, Edward Irving published an open letter to another of the Circle's wayward sons. Robert Baxter, a committed follower of Irving, contributor to *The Morning Watch*, and Spirit filled prophet, had shocked Irving and his supporters

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<sup>42</sup> Hugh McNeile, *The Times of the Gentiles* (London, 1828). McNeile dedicated this to his patron, A. L. Drummond.

when he appeared as a witness against Irving for the trustees of Regent Square. Before the court he announced, "We had all been speaking by a lying Spirit, and not by the Spirit of God."<sup>44</sup> On the 6<sup>th</sup> of July 1832, Irving wrote Baxter, pleading with him to cease "blaspheming the prophets and church of God."<sup>45</sup> Irving's request went unheeded. A short time later, Baxter published a sharply critical expose entitled *A Narrative of Facts*<sup>46</sup> wherein he described his own torturous attempt to seek, obey, and discern the Spirit's anointing, concluding that "the 'gifted persons' are deceived, and not deceivers, save instrumentally," and the whole endeavour had been a spurious sham. The pain felt by Irving is evident in his writings that followed its publication.<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, he assesses the situation through his premillennial perspective:

But what serveth this dispensation to the church? Much, every way. Chiefly to mar the work in the sight of the multitude, who were gaping after it, as to a market-place of mighty power and signs and wonders; —to separate those who bowed the knee to the waters of the Spirit and drank, from those who did but stoop their girded loins and stretch down the hand of to the brook that runneth in the way: to send back thousands to their homes, while the handful pass onward with Gideon to the fiery fight.<sup>48</sup>

The miracles at Regent Square were apparently attracting a broad, if not all together pure, interest. Baxter's denial of the very gifts he had once publicly demonstrated, led in Irving's eyes to the separating of those few who genuinely pursued the will and way of God, from those, who in their own vanity or curiosity, had appeared among the faithful. The prophetic word was unbending and had made clear that the last days would see a falling away from the truth as a faithful band fought in the dark for the cause of

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<sup>43</sup> Hugh McNeile, *Letters to a Friend, who has felt it his duty to secede from the Church of England, and who imagines that the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost are revived among the seceders* (London: James Nisbet, 1833), p. x. The friend was Spencer Perceval, M.P., son of the murdered Prime Minister, and later apostle in the Catholic Apostolic Church. Perceval's governess, Miss Hall, was among the first to speak in tongues at Regent Square.

<sup>44</sup> Quoted in A. L. Drummond, *Irving*, p. 209.

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in A. L. Drummond, *Irving*, p. 206.

<sup>46</sup> Robert Baxter, *Narrative of Facts, characterizing the Supernatural Manifestations in Members of Mr. Irving's Congregation, and other Individuals in England and Scotland, and formerly in the Writer himself* (London: James Nisbet, 1833). The manifestations of the Holy Spirit led also to Albury losing its publisher: James Nisbet (ordained an elder of the National Scot Church in May 1827) ceased publishing *The Morning Watch* after 1831, though his company continued to produce materials on premillennial doctrine for many years. That Nisbet had become the publisher of Baxter's *Narrative of Facts*, and McNeile's *Letters*, is perhaps even more telling.

<sup>47</sup> See for example *TMW* VII:139.2.

God. For all the shock and sorrow of Baxter's betrayal, Irving saw it as the ever-processing fulfillment of God's prophetic word and the confirmation of all he taught and believed. A review of Baxter's *Narrative of Facts*, though very critical of the work, recommends it to their readers as something that will only demonstrate the power of the Spirit and the truth of their own position.<sup>49</sup> In the journal's penultimate article, Evangelicalism is likened to Moab and Baxter to the "fallen prophet" Balaam who was used by Moab to bring destruction on the people in whom God was working.<sup>50</sup>

Others too, left the Circle. Hatley Frere, through whom Irving had been introduced to prophecy studies and William Cuninghame of Lainshaw, a Scot layman, distanced themselves from Irving and *The Morning Watch*. Both were professional expositors, publishing works on prophecy studies when Irving was a schoolboy, and both remained passionately committed to premillennialism, in a form very similar to Albury's, throughout their lives. Their differences with Irving lay not so much in order and detail as ardour and center. Their interest, like McNeile's, lay in the restoration of the Jews, and their exegetical labours lay in defining the details of this event and especially the role Britain would play in its accomplishment. Irving's unbridled passion, emphasis on spiritual gifts as an element of the last days, and perspective that the small band of prophecy students stood at the focal point of God's activity, were beyond their interest and passion. "Most that Drummond and Irving asserted is in Cuninghame, as it is in Faber, Frere, McNeile and Way. The differences are in tone, application, temperament. The later were professional specialists within the establishment, correlating their beliefs with their situation by prudently interpreting the prophecies to point away from Great Britain where, they recognized, God's battle had been lost, to the Palestine of the future, where it had not yet been fought."<sup>51</sup> Irving, Drummond, Tudor, and those who continued to contribute to *The Morning Watch*, saw the focal point of God's activity in Britain, which, though lost and apostate, nevertheless contained a small and faithful remnant who had foreseen and were even then manifesting the coming kingdom.

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<sup>49</sup> *TMW* VII:139.8f—March 1833. "What Caused Mr. Baxter's Fall." E. Irving. The biblical allusion is to Judges 7.

<sup>49</sup> *TMW* VII:201ff.

<sup>50</sup> *TMW* VII:246.5—June 1833.

The effect of these defections was significant. The Albury Circle and *The Morning Watch* lost the influence of more moderate—and possibly less vain—premillennialists. Consequently, their vision turned ever more from a larger, objective millennialism, to a narcissistic apocalypticism centered on their own lives and the struggles they endured. Additionally, McNeile's separation from the circle led Henry Drummond to quit the parish church—whose living was his gift—and turn to worship at the chapel at Albury Manor. From this point, Drummond's role would become increasingly prominent, and eventually lead to his being ordained an Apostle in the Catholic Apostolic Church.

If these conflicts and defections had served to advance Drummond, they had the opposite effect on Irving. The strange case of Robert Baxter had forced Irving under the control of the prophets of Regent Square. For Baxter, in spite of his gifting, had been viewed as an outsider by Mary Caird, Emily Cardale, and Mr. Taplin. Conflicting prophecies between Baxter and this inner circle made Irving's own lack of prophetic gifting profoundly obvious. Irving, dependent upon others to reveal the Lord's will in such matters, increasingly acquiesced before the instructions and even corrections pronounced by the prophets of his church. Irving's ministry was seen to lack the apostolic anointing the Circle had come to expect in the last days.

## 2. Living Under the Gifts of the Holy Spirit

### a) Restorationism and Hierocracy

Prior to the summer of 1831, references to the early church in *The Morning Watch* were rare and without significant elaboration. But from September of that year, an increasing number of articles turned to describe primitive Christianity as the typological paradigm of the church in their own day. "We presume that no one will deny that the churches as constituted by the Apostles are the models to which all Christian churches ought to be conformed; and as little will it be denied that all the gifts of the

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<sup>51</sup> Oliver, *Prophets*, p. 136. In my opinion, more originality should be ascribed to Irving than Oliver here suggests.



Holy Ghost were in some of the individuals who composed them."<sup>52</sup> The gifts of power were considered necessary if the church was to fulfill its mandate within the extraordinary conditions of the last days.

In March of 1832 Irving's church and its minister was commended in the journal as the closest to actually fulfilling the biblical standard:

The service approaching most nearly to the Apostolic model that we have ever witnessed, is that which has been carried on for some months in the Scotch Church every morning at half past six o'clock. The pastor, Mr. Irving, commences by a short prayer beseeching the presence of the Lord by his Spirit, to keep away intrusive and wandering thoughts; and that He Himself would speak to those assembled, through any, or all, of the members of his body, as it should please Him.<sup>53</sup>

But this was not to last. While Irving is held in high esteem to the journal's end, the manifestations of the Holy Spirit, interpreted through their historicist hermeneutic, made his marginalization, all but inevitable. Irving and his Circle had concluded, first that the millennial kingdom would see a full manifestation of spiritual gifts, and second that this characteristic had actually begun in the final days of the Gentile age. Viewed as the antitypical manifestation of Pentecost, the Albury Circle interpreted the outpouring around them as the rebirth of the church. The signs of the times were clear. As the Circle surveyed the ecclesial landscape, God's work was evident in terms that were both general and specific, the former being all those who had entrusted themselves to the prophetic word and eagerly awaited an imminent second advent, the latter being those upon whom the gifts had fallen and were thereby being set apart for leadership in the new church.

Albury's Restorationism—the belief that the five-fold apostolic ministry described in Ephesians 4:11 was to be restored in the last days—was the product of their literal typical hermeneutic and its historicist doctrine of revelation, fused to a burgeoning Pentecostal expectation.<sup>54</sup> The prophecy of Joel two, with other biblical images, such as the "early" and "latter rain," were also used to describe the last days outpouring in

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<sup>52</sup> *TMW* V:132.3—March 1832.

<sup>53</sup> *TMW* V:135.5. "No Gifts, No Perfect Church." Anonymous.

<sup>54</sup> References to restorationism include: V:143.5, 318.7; VI: 265.5, 332.2, 431.9f., 435.6, 442.5, 443.5, and especially the articles "Prophets and Apostles" (V:332-8) and "An Interpretation of the Fourteenth Chapter of the Apocalypse" (VI:262-85, Edward Irving).

terms that were at once literal, typical, and prophetic.<sup>55</sup> The manifestation of the gifts combined with their expectations to produce three conclusions. First, they evidenced God's presence among them, verifying both the purity of their faith and the apostasy of those who criticized them or denied its reality.<sup>56</sup> Second, this anointing was God's call and preparation for leadership in the last days' church. In describing the gifts, Irving wrote, "I cannot help expressing my conviction, that those who have received this gift are marked out thereby for the work of being Christ's witnesses, and speaking his word with power."<sup>57</sup> Consequently, the voice of God through the "gifted ones" became uniquely authoritative as the Circle interpreted both Scripture and the signs of the time, a fact that may explain in part Irving's unwillingness or inability to maintain authority over the "gifted ones."<sup>58</sup> If they spoke in tongues they were baptized by the Spirit; further discernment was understood as unnecessary and criticism seen as quenching the Spirit. "I believe that no unclean spirit can counterfeit that sign; and that, if it is counterfeited, it must be by the direct will of the person so doing: he is to be set down as playing a cheat—not as one that is himself deluded by an evil spirit."<sup>59</sup> Third, and related to this, the manifestation of charismata, especially tongues, became a standing sign

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<sup>55</sup> VI:253.7—December 1832. Drawing upon such verses as Joel 2:23; Jer. 3:3, 5:24; Hos. 6:3; Zech. 10:1; and James 5:7, *The Morning Watch* interprets the term "latter rain" to mean a second outpouring of the Holy Spirit, greater than that experienced by the early church at Pentecost. Examples may be found at: I:38.4, 38.8, 378.5; V:253.7; VII:251.7.

<sup>56</sup> *TMW* IV:88.6, 91.2, 93.7, 96.8, 110.1; V:78.3. It should be remembered (ch. 5) that this explicitly contradicts earlier statements.

<sup>57</sup> *TMW* IV:92.5—September 1831. "On the Gifts of the Holy Ghost, Commonly Called Supernatural." Edward Irving.

<sup>58</sup> Evidence of the prophet's growing influence may be seen in Irving's "Interpretation of the Fourteenth Chapter of the Apocalypse" (*TMW* VI:18-44; continued from vol. V. p. 325). Here Irving provides an interpretation of Rev. 14 based in part on the insights received from the Regent Square prophets. But this installment, and the one preceding it, lacks the precision characteristic of his earlier works and his conclusions here are more nebulous and ethereal. At several points Irving states he himself would not have believed such conclusions had not the Holy Spirit made it clear through the prophets and his own studies (apparently, in that order).

<sup>59</sup> *TMW* IV:91.2—September 1831. At times contributors to the journal would express the opposite perspective. See for example *TMW* V:430.5—June 1832 where an anonymous reviewer, quoting John Lock's Journal entry of 18th September, 1681, expresses: "Miracles are to be judged by the doctrine, and not the doctrine by the miracles." Irving too, expressed that tongues were not, "the sign of infallibility" (IV:91.3), while an anonymous writer reminds his readers that Satan is capable of counterfeiting "the power of the Holy Spirit," making it necessary to discern whether the miracle "is conformable with the Word of God and...conducting to holiness" (V:149.4). In practice, however, these principles were hardly adhered to. Irving and the Circle were so certain that tongues and other gifts were evidence of God's presence, that no significant restraints were used in practice.

of doctrinal veracity. The gift of tongues was all but equated with the Spirit's inspiring the writers of Scripture and were seen to have essentially the same effect:

A person speaking with another tongue is in this condition: his mind and his body are in a quiescent, dark, unconscious [sic], and as it were separated state,—his spirit is possessed by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, which is the Holy Ghost, and made a partaker with him of his own feelings and affections, with the enjoyment of which being filled, it doth by the tongue express the same unto the ears of the incomprehensible and invisible God.<sup>60</sup>

The methodology demanded of their hermeneutic locked the Circle into an inevitable course, destining the future of the group and individual alike. Without any eclipse of the premillennial center—indeed, emerging as a direct result of its hermeneutic, doctrine of progressive revelation, and philosophy of history—the manifestations of the Spirit became the focal point of revelation, defining the group's direction, leadership, and message. To the end, *The Morning Watch* explicitly extolled Irving. "We should have a very low opinion of the spiritual discernment of any person that said he recognised the voice of the prophets in Mr. Irving's church to be the voice of the Spirit of God, who did not equally perceive the words of the Spirit in Mr. Irving's own ministrations."<sup>61</sup> Yet tacitly, this position could not long be maintained. Lacking the gifting that had fallen on those around him, Irving was forced to acquiesce before the spiritual insight of others. In spite of their intentions to the contrary, the authority and prestige of the "gifted ones" increased, even as those not so endowed dimmed in the church, set as a light on the hill.

On November 7<sup>th</sup>, 1832, at a prayer meeting at Irving's home, Henry Drummond, announced to J. B. Cardale, "art thou not an Apostle?" The following morning Irving announced to his congregation that the Lord had begun to restore the apostolic model, and called upon Cardale to be both faithful and aware of the awful burden required of his office. Exercising his authority, Cardale ordained Henry Drummond to the episcopate on the 26<sup>th</sup> of December, declaring him Angel (Bishop) of the Albury Congregation. On the 24<sup>th</sup>, September 1833 Cardale named him the second apostle of the fledgling church. Again, as Drummond's leadership waxed, Irving's waned.

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<sup>60</sup> V:78.2—March 1832.

<sup>61</sup> *TMW* VI:332.6—December 1832.

### 3. The Fall of Babylon

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of March 1833,<sup>62</sup> Irving returned to Annan, the place of his birth, and there, in the very church where he had been both baptized and ordained, Irving stood before the Church of Scotland under the charge of heresy. The trial opened at midday with the parish church bursting with an estimated two thousand people. The stature and renown of Irving was well known to the court whose senior member, Mr. Sloan, compared himself to David standing before “even so great a giant as the reverend gentleman.”<sup>63</sup> Since the condemnation of his friends by the General Assembly of 1831, Irving had only increasing disdain for his mother church. Before the court he stood bitter and unrepentant, refusing all fellowship and hospitality extended him. Irving’s condemnation was inevitable, not for any real heresy regarding the human nature of Christ, but for the pragmatic need of distancing the church from this wayward son. As evening fell upon the church the moderator asked Irving if he had any objection why sentence should not then be passed. “Objection?” returned Irving, “All objection! I object, not for my own sake, but for the sake of Jesus Christ my Lord, whom I serve and honour. I object for your sakes...I object for the church’s sake.”<sup>64</sup> Following these words the moderator asked the senior member to pray before pronouncing sentence. Suddenly the darkened sanctuary was split with a cry from the assembly: “Arise, depart! Arise, depart! Flee ye out of her, flee ye out of her! Ye cannot pray! How can ye pray? How can ye pray to Christ whom ye deny? Ye cannot pray! Depart, depart! Flee, flee!” Attempting to discern the source of the outcry, a member of presbytery raised the solitary candle, peering into the darkness as the speaker, the Rev. David Dow of Irongray, rose and departed the church. Turmoil and confusion spread through the congregation as Irving rose from his seat and followed his friend, crying out as he left, “Stand forth! Stand forth! What! Will ye not obey the voice of the Holy Ghost? As many as will obey the voice of the Holy Ghost—let them depart!”<sup>65</sup> With the restoration to order Irving’s

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<sup>62</sup> A. L. Drummond, *Irving*, p. 218, misdates this by one year.

<sup>63</sup> Quoted in A. L. Drummond, *Irving*, p. 218.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, p. 219.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*. p. 220.

home presbytery pronounced him no longer fit as a minister of the Gospel and stripped him of his membership within the Church of Scotland.

Irving returned to London, not as a hero or martyr to the cause he had long proclaimed and defended at great personal cost, but as a man without title or office. No longer ordained as a minister and tacitly under the hierarchical structure of a new church, Irving was received as a deacon, the lowest order in the new hierarchy being formed by Cardale, Drummond, and the "gifted" ones. On Sunday 31 March, 1833, Irving was informed by Cardale that he lacked credentials to perform the sacrament of baptism but would be allowed to preach. The following Thursday, Cardale was called by one of the prophets and instructed to ordain Irving as angel of the London Congregation, which Cardale did the next day at the church's evening service. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of April Cardale raised him to the position of Angel (senior pastor) of the new sect meeting now on Newman Street, London, under the authority of the prophets and apostles God had raised in these the last days.

**4. *The Morning Watch* is past... The Day Star is about to Arise**

"And ye who have been roused and  
quickened by our labours, press ye forward.

The time is short, very short: there is much work to be done,  
and the Master standeth at the very door.

*The Morning Watch* is past, the day dawneth,  
the Day Star is about to arise."<sup>66</sup>

The final issue of *The Morning Watch* was published in June of 1833. In the eyes of the Albury Circle, the Spirit of the Age, unleashed with the French Revolution had all but consumed Britain and the brief years of *The Morning Watch* had wrought changes that had perhaps surprised even the men of the *Watch*. A committed group of prophetic exegetes, once gathered at Albury Manor were now largely dissevered. Some had left in wrath or horror at the direction their initial deliberations had taken. William

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<sup>66</sup> *TMW* VII:402.7—June 1833. "Conclusion of *The Morning Watch*." Anonymous, but quite probably John Tudor, editor of *The Morning Watch*.

Cunningham and James Hatley Frere, the Circle's interpretive patriarchs had gently but firmly rejected the changing interests behind *The Morning Watch*. Robert Baxter's very public denunciation of Irving and the Pentecostal manifestations at Regent Square were profoundly destructive to the Circle.<sup>67</sup> Others merely drifted away. Daniel Wilson became the well-known Bishop of Calcutta, while Hugh McNeil was made Dean of Ripon, and "the leader, politically of the Conservative Party, and ecclesiastically of the Evangelicals."<sup>68</sup> Henry Drummond, perhaps the least capable and most fickle of the Circle, rose to apostleship in the Catholic Apostolic Church. Edward Irving, arguably the most brilliant of their members and one of Britain's most famous preachers in 1829, had by 1833 been twice declared a heretic, relegated to the margins of the new church birthed from his vision, and viewed by society as a pariah and his work a *cause d' scandale*. From the shadows of Irving's influence rose those who would be named apostles and prophets of the last days and made leaders of the Catholic Apostolic Church. And it was to this new church that those behind *The Morning Watch* turned their attention. John Tudor, noting that while their publisher had informed him that the journal, "is more and more extending its circulation,"<sup>69</sup> he announced to their readers that the demands of starting a new church made it impossible to continue with its publication.

To the end, *The Morning Watch* proclaimed, without apology or regret, its premillennial message:

The followers of Christ and the followers of Antichrist are now gathering: each is now requiring, not merely the nominal, but the personal services of their respective adherents: Christ is gathering his children into the true church, to do him service there, and in so doing to be prepared for his coming; Satan is gathering his hosts, under the standard of Liberalism, to become the pioneers of that 'wicked one, that man of sin, the son of perdition,' the personal Antichrist (2 Thess. ii. 3, 8).<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Presumably Baxter maintained his premillennial worldview. His son, a missionary to Canada and editor of his own prophetic journal, "managed to predict incorrect dates [of the Second Advent] from 1861 through 1908, presumably being saved only by death from an infinite series" (Sandeep, *Roots*, p. 59).

<sup>68</sup> A. L. Drummond, *Irving*, p. 133.

<sup>69</sup> *TMW* VII:399.2—June 1833.

<sup>70</sup> *TMW* VII:399.6.

In May of 1834, Carlyle, while making his way across Kensington Gardens, saw a figure rise and move toward him. Carlyle recognized Irving, though greatly changed over the past two years.

His head, which I had left raven-black, was grown grey, on the temples, almost snow-white; the face was hollow and wrinkly, collapsed; the figure, still perfectly erect, seemed to have lost its elasticity and strength. . . . His tone was not despondent; but it was low, pensive, full of silent sorrow. Once, perhaps twice, I got a small bit of Annandale laugh from him, strangely genuine, though so lamed and overclouded; this was to me the most affecting thing of all, and still is when I recall it.<sup>71</sup>

A mere eighteen months from the publication of Tudor's farewell, at the age of 42, Irving would die in Glasgow, and be buried in its cathedral.

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<sup>71</sup> Carlyle, quoted in A. L. Drummond, *Irving*, p. 222.

# Conclusion

## Designing the Last Days

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In establishing this Journal, it was a primary object to bring before the church the abstruser, and too often forgotten, points of doctrine, which it was supposed were especially needed at the present time, though from the peculiar character of the age they were especially deficient in the quarters where most needed. This primary object we have never lost sight of, and it has given our journal a dry and didactic character, of which those who know not the reasons for it have sometimes complained.<sup>1</sup>



### 1. Assessing the Significance of *The Morning Watch*

It would not be difficult to dismiss *The Morning Watch* or conclude its influence was merely peripheral and inconsequential. Through the brief years of its circulation, *The Morning Watch*, moved decisively from a voice of renewal centered upon the message of the prophetic Scriptures to prodigious speculation, religious narcissism, and sectarian zealotry. Critique of the larger church decayed to her utter condemnation and Albury's endeavour to bring to it a renewal of spiritual conviction was exchanged for the building of its pure and unblemished replacement. Albury's radical premillennialism, especially when necessarily bound to Pentecostal manifestations, convinced church and society alike that their message was more in keeping with Bedlam than the Bible.

Irving too, is easy to dismiss. His idiosyncrasies, unbridled impetuosity, and consuming passion for prophecy has made him a fascinating, if easily underestimated, element of nineteenth century history and influence. Flamboyant, mysterious, and domineering to be sure, it nevertheless has remained doubtful that his thought was either uniquely creative or bore any lasting influence. This suspicion is exacerbated by Irving's alleged Christological heresy. While largely misunderstood—in his own day and ours—it has remained an easy means of justifying his repudiation. Even the renaissance of Irving studies since 1984 has not moved Irving from the periphery of influence or demon-

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<sup>1</sup> *TMW* VII:140.7—March 1833. Anonymous. Uncharacteristically understated.



strated his suasion upon later thought. For all the brilliance of his incarnational Christology, there appears no evidence it significantly shaped later theologians or underwent through the hands of others any serious development. Instead, it appears as something of a fluke, an anachronism isolated from either the Cappadocians or Karl Barth with whom it has most in common.<sup>2</sup> Irving's Pentecostalism, too, saw no extrapolation in his own day or the decades that followed, nor are actual connections between Albury and the twentieth century Pentecostal revival certain.<sup>3</sup> For these reasons, Irving, the Albury Circle, and *The Morning Watch* have been essentially ignored in the history of doctrinal development, and rendered as little more than an interesting cul-de-sac of church history and their doctrinal perspectives a curious, if irrelevant anomaly.

While an understandable conclusion, it is inaccurate. *The Morning Watch* and the Albury Circle represent a small but prominent group of significant influence. Here the optimistic post-millennialism of the previous age fell before the pessimistic apocalypticism of the premillennial worldview, and all but disappeared from the theological landscape of Britain and then America. Around the table at Albury and through the pages of *The Morning Watch*, the essential doctrinal contours of modern premillennialism took form, and from here, spread across time and continents to become profoundly influential in ways far beyond the church and its doctrine.<sup>4</sup> The influence of The Albury Circle, through the premillennial worldview it gave the modern world, has given signifi-

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<sup>2</sup> See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 1:2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1980), p. 154, where Barth commends Irving's Christology.

<sup>3</sup> Regrettably, space does not allow for a detailed look at the possible influence Irving and the Albury Circle may have had on twentieth century Pentecostalism. Yet these may exist. Gordon Strachan's assertion that the two movements of Irvingism and Pentecostalism were "ignorant of each other's existence" (*op. cit.* p. 19), is not wholly true. The earliest Pentecostal literature demonstrates an awareness of Irving and the existence of tongues in his congregation. Recently D. William Faupel has suggested an actual historical link between Irving and the nascent Pentecostal movement seventy-five years later in the person of John Alexander Dowie. Faupel notes that Dowie was born and attended university at Edinburgh at the height of the Catholic Apostolic Church's popularity and influence. Holding that "it is unthinkable that Dowie, with his inquiring mind, would not be at least aware of the teachings of this church" (Faupel, *op. cit.* p. 134), proceeds to note five parallels between Irving and Dowie: 1) both Irving and Dowie saw their ministries as preparations for the return of Christ; 2) Irving's movement became known as the Catholic Apostolic Church, Dowie's became the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church; 3) both held a doctrine of restorationism anticipating the renewal of the apostolic and prophetic offices before the end of the church age; 4) both ministries expressed themselves in terms of Elijah ministries; and 5) both movements sought the restoration of the ministry of the Seventy, the "restoration host." The relationship between Irving and Pentecostalism, through, Dowie or perhaps the Keswick Bible Conferences of the nineteenth century is worth further research, but must lie beyond the purview of this thesis.

cant shape to the social and political contours of the United States, profoundly influencing that nation's response to the two world wars, the Cold War, and the Middle East. It is undeniable that President Reagan's understanding of the Soviet Union as the evil empire emerges from his premillennial perspective.<sup>5</sup> Arguably, the very existence of modern Israel is due in no small part to the premillennial worldview and the efforts of its adherents to protect the Jews, defend Zionism, and pray—and fight—for the peace of Jerusalem.<sup>6</sup>

But in the end, it is neither the influence of *The Morning Watch* nor its specific relationship to a latter premillennial tradition that has occupied this study. The focus instead has been the theological content of the journal and the assumptions and methods that lay behind it. As this thesis reaches its conclusion, I intend to keep this course, using the space remaining to summarize and critique the assumptions, method, and doctrine of *The Morning Watch*. These begin with Edward Irving, whose personality and passion largely determined the course of *The Morning Watch*. From this the thesis will briefly examine the controlling postulates that lay behind the premillennial enterprise. Finally we will turn a critical gaze to Albury's premillennialism.

## 2. Insights Gleaned from *The Morning Watch*

### a) A middle Course on Irving

Irving's writing in *The Morning Watch* reveal that he was, above and before anything else, a pretribulational-premillennial theologian. This cannot be overstated. From his meeting with Hately Frere in 1825 until his death in December 1834, Irving's

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<sup>4</sup> See Mark R. Patterson and Andrew Walker, "Our Unspeakable Comfort," op. cit.

<sup>5</sup> Gary Wills, *Under God: religion and American Politics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), especially ch. 13, "Reagan and 'the Prophecies,'" pp. 144-151. Boyer, *When Time Shall be No More*, pp. 140ff. James Mills, "The Serious Implications of a 1971 Conversation with Ronald Reagan: A Footnote to Current History," *San Diego Magazine*, Aug. 1985. Hunter S. Thompson, "As the Worm Turns," *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 29, 1987.

every thought and writing was shaped under the aegis of his imminent adventism and premillennial convictions. This fact, obvious in *The Morning Watch*, is easily missed in Irving's other writings, especially perhaps, his collected works,<sup>7</sup> and has led to several errors in the study of Irving and his theology. First, particular elements of Irving's thought—Pentecostalism and incarnational Christology to name the most dominant—are approached in isolation from his premillennialism. Irving, separated from his actual theological context, is given a new visage. Second, as mentioned earlier,<sup>8</sup> discrepancies between one type of writing and another, have led, to the conjecture of an "early" and a "late" Irving, the one being orthodox and insightful, the latter being schismatic and speculative. But *The Morning Watch* reveals this to be a largely artificial construct. While whole articles, brilliantly articulate a Chalcedonian Christology, these are juxtaposed between blistering jeremiads leveled at a complacent church and radiant descriptions of the return and regency of a millennial and glorified Christ. Additionally, in spite of the passion, creativity, or insight Irving might have brought to either Christology or Pentecostalism, Irving never allowed either of these to be made the center of his interest. Irving's writings, in *The Morning Watch*, show his focus to ever and only remain on the premillennial return of Christ.

Two camps, of opposite polemical intent, have endeavoured to depict Irving as a champion of Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity. On the one side is Gordon Strachan who portrays Irving specifically as a "Pentecostal theologian."<sup>9</sup> Strachan views Irving's writings on the outpouring of the Spirit as providing an especially valuable perspective to Pentecostal theology, wherein the traditional Wesleyan/holiness perspective, with its second blessing doctrine, is abandoned for a more Christological and Trinitarian base. In

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<sup>6</sup> Ronald Sanders, *The High Walls of Jerusalem: A History of the Balfour Declaration and the Birth of the British Mandate for Palestine* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1983). Douglas J. Carver, *Albion and Ariel: British Puritanism and the Birth of Political Zionism* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995). Mayir Vereté, *From Palmerston to Balfour: Collected Writings of Mayir Vereté*, ed. by Norman Rose, introduction by Albert Hourani (London: Frank Cass & Co. Limited, 1992). Grace Halsell, *Prophecy and Politics: Militant Evangelists on the Road to Nuclear War* (Westport, Conn.: Lawrence Hill and Co., 1986). E. L. Langston, *Great Britain, Palestine, Russia, and the Jews* (London: Charles Thynne, 1918).

<sup>7</sup> Edward Irving, *The Collected Writings of Edward Irving, in Five Volumes*, G. Carlyle, ed., (London: Alexander Strachan, 1865).

<sup>8</sup> Introduction, p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> Strachan, *op. cit.*

a sense, this works. Irving's sermons on baptism, his incarnational Christology, and his understanding of the perichoresis, do indeed provide an alternative approach. But Strachan all but completely ignores Irving's millennialism, missing the fact that Irving—like all Pentecostalism following the Azusa Street Revival of 1906—viewed the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as an element and/or sign of the last days. Opposite Strachan is Arnold Dallimore, who specifically names Irving “the fore-runner of the Charismatic movement.”<sup>10</sup> In the guise of an objective biography, Dallimore's clear intent is to tarnish contemporary neo-pentecostalism by linking it to a conjectured “latter” Irving who, having begun his ministry with the greatest potential, had mysteriously and tragically fallen into the absurd. Yet again, Irving's premillennialism is all but ignored. While Dallimore notes Irving's change “from a more general type of ministry to one which was devoted very largely to the interpretation of prophecy,”<sup>11</sup> he later suggests that this too was abandoned in his turn to nascent Pentecostalism. Yet, as we have seen, this could hardly be less true. Irving remained deeply committed to the premillennial worldview, seeking the outpouring of the gifts and shaping his understanding of this event wholly in the light of premillennial expectations. *The Morning Watch* reveals that Irving was neither a Pentecostal theologian nor part of a charismatic lunatic fringe. His theology contains a convoluted mass of ideas on the person and work of the Holy Spirit, some brilliant and some absurd, but all bound to his imminent adventism.

The last fifteen years have seen something of a renaissance in Irving studies, focused almost entirely upon his incarnational Christology.<sup>12</sup> These have provided tremendous and accurate insight into a portion of Irving's thought at its best. Through hundreds of pages, Irving and other contributors to the journal endeavoured to describe the nature and implications of the incarnation. Here the incarnation is set forth in profoundly Trinitarian terms, “robustly supralapsarian,”<sup>13</sup> and carefully woven between the oft repeated errors of Apollinarius and Arius, Eutyches, and Nestorius. Irving seems well

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<sup>10</sup> Dallimore, *op. cit.*

<sup>11</sup> Dallimore, p. 63.

<sup>12</sup> Colin Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, *op. cit.* and Colin Gunton, “Two Dogmas Revisited: Edward Irving's Christology,” *op. cit.* Graham McFarlane, *Christ and the Spirit: The Doctrine of the Incarnation According to Edward Irving* (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster Press, 1996).

aware of the ultimate issues involved and carefully crafted a doctrine that allowed the Second Person to become fully human, while in no way diminishing, on the one hand, his deity or rendering it mere docetic illusion. Across the pages of *The Morning Watch* Irving's Christology is commended and faithfully elaborated and recent studies have accurately demonstrated Irving's insight and theological skill.

But again, these studies of Irving are done in complete isolation from his premillennial center. While Irving was a passionate and articulate defender of Christ's full humanity, his ultimate Christological interest lay elsewhere. For all the importance of the incarnation, its revelation of Christ's nature was only partial. Truly he had taken flesh, indeed, sinful flesh with all its weakness, and in his taking it he became the model for all who would live a life of holiness before God, in sinful flesh under the abetment of the Holy Spirit. But ultimately, it was not the human Christ of the incarnation that fascinated Irving but the glorified Christ of the millennium to come. Here was a different Christ, a larger Christ, unveiled and wearing new visage. Here was a Christ who had shed the weakness and humiliation of human flesh to come and reign as glorified Son of God, and in his coming, raise to like level all who had loved and sought his appearing. The weakness of human flesh, in Christ and Christian alike, was for Irving, an increasingly irrelevant issue as their age was swept into the radiance of the millennial kingdom. There the caducity of the flesh—for Christ and those raptured and raised to reign as co-regents beside him—had no meaning, no reality. The Christology of Irving and his circle, as conveyed through *The Morning Watch*, is defined by the Christ of the millennial ideal.

Beyond the doctrine and theology is the very complex person of Edward Irving. Through his writings in *The Morning Watch*, he exists as an enigma, a paradox of conflicting characteristics, impossible in the end to reconcile. Here Irving is revealed as a gentle pastor, careful theologian, and viperous prophet of the last day's wrath. Through the journal one finds in Irving deep wells of reasoned intellect and irrational passion, and the evidence that he drew liberally from both.

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<sup>13</sup> Colin Gunton, *Theology through the Theologians* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), p. 155.

These paradoxes and contradictions surround the public figure of Irving. He was a leader of great influence and charisma, with a physic and passion that towered above the crowds, pulling them *en masse* to his way of thinking. Before blistering abuse and criticism he remained courageously committed to his course and what he held to be true. The Christological controversies display this most clearly, as he fought against a vast and outspoken majority, at great cost, yet never surrendering to views he found inconsistent with Christ and the gospel. Yet for all his tenacity, Irving was easily manipulated by others. If "Irving's adoption of prophetic views was also the result of the singularly plastic cast of his personality in the strong hands of other people,"<sup>14</sup> it was even more so with regard to his Pentecostalism. Before the prophets and gifted of Regent Square his will went limp and he was himself controlled by the very prophets his prayers had sought and ministry produced.

What was it that produced the magnitude of inconsistencies in Edward Irving? Growing pride, as the *beau monde* stood in line outside the chapel waiting for tickets to a sermon in which their world was denounced? Broken self-esteem as these lost interest, newspapers mocked, and the clamour of heresy rose around him? Perhaps the death of first his infant son Edward, and then three other children, had broken his spirit and led him to pine for an imminent new world? And did not this "singularly plastic cast of his personality" also influence and determine his course as he was pulled from within and without by the forces of his own impetuosity and the resolve of those around him? In the end, certainty lies beyond the grasp of any who would wish to know Irving better and we are left to make, what can only be at best, educated speculations.

It seems likely that elements of Irving's own personality should be first addressed. His brilliance was a mixed blessing, especially so when combined with his romantic idealism and precipitance. Robert Baxter wrote that Irving's

mind is so imaginative as almost to scorn precision of ideas, and his views thus continuously vary, without himself being aware of it. His energy and activity, swelling into impetuosity, leave him peculiarly open to error, in all subjects which require deep thought and patient and continued investigation. With the brightest talents, no man was ever perhaps less qualified to investigate and unfold the deeper mysteries of relig-

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<sup>14</sup> Sheridan Gilley, "Edward Irving: Prophet of the Millennium," in Garnett and Matthew, eds., *Revival and Religion Since 1700: Essays for John Walsh* (London: Hambledon Press, 1993), p. 106.

ion, which not only require precision of thought, but a continued watchfulness and patient correction of terms in their statement.<sup>15</sup>

Accurate in part, it, like most statements regarding Irving, betrays only a partial reality. Irving's Christological studies show him to be a theologian of uncommon talent and depth. His premillennialism demonstrates Irving's love for the precision of ideas and tireless labour to shape the prophecies into a single systematic whole. In fact, Irving's essential ideas did not "continuously vary," but remained resolute and unwavering. Additionally, there is no question that Irving possessed the patience and depth of thought to unfold any of Christianity's deepest mysteries. But this intellect was ever shaped by his vivid imagination and romantic idealism. Irving thrilled to that which was most grand. His disdain was reserved for those who failed to see the great whole, those who refused to seek the ultimate, who remained content instead to live ever within and for the mundane. Before coming to London, crossing the Clyde by ferry, Irving remarked to his traveling companion, "You are content to go back and forth on the same route...but as for me, I hope to go into the deep ocean of truth."<sup>16</sup> And so Irving had committed himself to pursue and indwell the unexplored depths and found in prophecy a sea vast enough to contain the extent of his vision.

Coupled to this creative and precipitant personality was a streak of strong willed independence that seemed to compel Irving to move against the cultural and theological mores of his day. Whether walking the streets of London in cape and fedora or preaching in a style more reminiscent of the age of Milton than Carlyle, Irving seemed particularly to delight in playing the eccentric.

Irving was dowered with the double curse of originality and independence—a wayward genius, and an obstinate habit of 'standing on his own instincts.' He had fed his soul with words of Chrysostom. . . of Jeremy Taylor. . . and of Hooker. . . till he had come to regard, as of mean speech and feeble thought, all living preachers, with the exception of Chalmers. He had nurtured his ardent spirit by the companionship of those great churchmen. . . till he had become of such heroic mood as to disdain the timid bearing

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<sup>15</sup> Robert Baxter, *Narrative of Facts*, op. cit.

<sup>16</sup> Oliphant, op.cit., p. 74.

of his contemporaries. . . and despise the low arts by which, in the Scottish scarce less than in the English Establishment, the clergy obtained preferment."<sup>17</sup>

Thus pride too became a factor in the shaping of Edward Irving. On preparing to leave Glasgow for London, Irving announced to the Rev. Story of Rosneath, "Now you shall see what great things I will do yet!"<sup>18</sup> It took little time for Irving's vision to find fulfillment. Within a year of arriving in London his church was filled with society's best and brightest, all striving for the few seats available to hear London's most famous preacher. But it was not to last. "Fashion went her idle way to gaze on Egyptian crocodiles, Iroquois hunters, or whatever else there might be; forth this man, who unhappily could not in his turn forget. The intoxicating draught had been swallowed; no force of natural health could cast it out."<sup>19</sup> Irving had long aspired to greatness. Prophecy studies and a leading role as last day' prophet provided Irving with both the importance of place and grandeur of cause for which he had always hungered.

Observing Irving's compulsive nature, many have unsympathetically pronounced his fate to be no more than he deserved. The famous Princeton scholar B. B. Warfield wrote:

"'Oh,' [cries one of Irving's biographers] 'that the whole sad tribe of prophetic pedants and hysterical pietists had gone their own way, leaving him to go his!' Did they not go their own way? And was it their fault that he never had a way of his own? Why burden the 'Albury Sages' or the crowd of hysterical women which surrounded him, and to whom he gave all too willing an ear with 'the shipwreck of Irving's genius and usefulness'? . . . Were it not juster to say simply that this was the particular kind of fire which Irving chose to play with, and that, therefore, this is the particular way in which he burned his fingers. It is altogether probable, being the man he was, that if it had not been in these he would have burned them in some other flames."<sup>20</sup>

Perhaps. But the contents of *The Morning Watch* suggest a middle course on Irving in which he is neither so easily dismissed nor uncritically lauded. Ultimately, Irving remains paradoxical and complex. Arrogant to be sure, he could at the same time

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<sup>17</sup> Washington Wilks, *Edward Irving: An Ecclesiastical and Literary Biography*, (London, 1854) Quoted in Dallimore, *The Life of Edward Irving*, p. 12. Wilks' opinion is substantiated in *The Morning Watch*: "Oh, I abhor and nauseate, as much as any Scottish peasant who wears the blue bonnet, these empty, heartless, feckless, foolish, productions of what is called the moderate school of Scotch preaching" (TMW 1:614.2—December 1829). See also Oliphant, pp. 37, 43, 74.

<sup>18</sup> Oliphant, p. 73.

<sup>19</sup> Carlyle, *Fraser's Magazine*, Edinburgh, 1831, #61.

<sup>20</sup> B. B. Warfield, *op. cit.*, p. 153



*-Conclusion-*  
*Designing the Last Days*

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display a marvelous humility. Resolute and stubborn, Irving was often powerless before the will and influence of others whom he admired or whose favour he strove to own. A brilliant theologian and preacher, Irving's intellectual gifts were profound, and might perhaps have rivaled Coleridge if things had been different. But such a difference does not of course exist, and we are left with an Irving who can no more be proclaimed a Christological theologian as Christological heretic, enthusiast as rationalist, genius as fool. Perhaps he is best seen as a mix of all these and more. But in all things, the good and the ill alike, one must admire Irving for his courage, integrity, and sincerity. If his perspectives were often wrong, vapid, or frivolous, they emerged from a pure heart endeavouring always to follow his God and faithfully proclaim the truth, regardless of cost or hardship, as he understood it.

If we would not envy, we must be crucified to the world, and bear daily the reproaches of the foolish ones, who see nothing in man's life, but titles and honours and preferments, and riches and enjoyments of the flesh and of the carnal mind. From which if we would turn away, seeking after truth, righteousness, faith, and charity, then must we be content to be accounted fools and fanatics, and enthusiasts and madmen, which to bear, costeth no little suffering in the flesh, and from those we would wish to please.<sup>21</sup>

*b) Designing the Last Days:  
The Contours and Failure of Albury's Premillennialism*

The premillennial theology developed at Albury and disseminated through the pages of *The Morning Watch*, was viewed by the Circle as the objective content and message of God's revelation, in Scripture and history. Believing that the end of the age had begun with the French Revolution, and certain the millennial kingdom and its temporal unfolding was the center and content of the Bible, the contributors to the journal endeavoured to create a universal system through which this might be demonstrated. What Albury failed to see was that their entire system was an artificial fabrication built almost entirely upon their own, highly subjective, *Weltanschauung*, with all its attendant fears, biases, and hopes. Raised to the level of the ultimate and then read into the text as its inherent message, Albury's opinions became for them the Word of God. These pre-suppositions, empowered by the ambiguity inherent to progressive-historicist revelation,

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<sup>21</sup> *TMW* VI:317.4—December 1832.

combined to transform “eschatology” into a materialist teleology and faith into the no-etic grasp of foundationalist axioms made accessible through proper methodology.

(1) The Power of Presupposition,  
the Poverty of Historicism<sup>22</sup>

Albury’s premillennial doctrine was established on five immutable and inexpugnable presuppositions. First, and most important, was the premise that their age had reached its end and the return of Jesus was imminent. This was for the Circle, an unquestionable certainty. Albury’s every act and word expressed this adamant principle; benevolent societies, missionary enterprises, and the burgeoning influences of democracy, industrialism, and capitalism, were evaluated only and always from the “hagioscope” of an imminent advent. Second, was the belief that the world, in the vast majority of its population, institutions, and civilizations, was irredeemably fallen and under God’s wrathful judgment. Third, that nothing short of apocalyptic cataclysm could transform the world from the depth of this depravity and usher in the millennial kingdom. Fourth, history, understood as progressive, inosculated, and the manifestation of inner Trinitarian realities, was revelatory. And finally, the Bible inerrantly describes the course, character, and inner correlations of this progress toward its intended goal and conclusive purpose. These principles are explicitly repeated and passionately defended through the journal’s four and half year circulation and upon the foundation of these presuppositions the Albury Circle built their doctrinal system.

Albury’s premillennial hermeneutic was built upon these postulates and shaped to provide the interpretive principles by which they might be consistently derived from the text. While explicitly emphasizing the literal, the Circle placed a greater, though usually tacit, emphasis upon the principle that faithful interpretation must reflect prophetic realities and a proper hermeneutic was defined not only by its faithfulness to the literal word, but also by how it allowed the text to convey, in some way, these truths. This was achieved through specific use of history, which was seen to express a single nar-

rative, lineally directed toward, and typologically manifesting, an ultimate conclusion. The literal-typical hermeneutic became the means by which this single narrative and goal might be discerned across a diversity of texts and genres, and across the breadth of history, to provide a literal and prophetic interpretation of the Bible.

By the end of the eighteenth century, and for the Albury Circle particularly, the “literal sense” had come to mean the historical sense. History had, at this time, become an area of human knowledge. History was “objectified” as the human knower endeavoured to step back from the course of historical events, which were in turn made an object that could be assessed in relationship to himself. Implied with this was the assumption that the basic structure of this knowledge corresponds to the thought structure of the knowing individual. At this point, one of two courses is usually followed. The one—here one thinks of Lessing—relativizes history and finds in its course or details nothing of authoritative validity or ultimate value.<sup>23</sup> Those behind *The Morning Watch* took another approach. Albury assumed that history, as a divine act, objectively revealed in its “accidents” the very nature of God and an analogous foretaste of his ultimate intentment for creation. Interestingly, the importance of history in both perspectives is essentially found in what lay behind it. For one, this might be “necessary truths,” unbound and unfettered to any historic accident. For Albury it meant the millennial ideal whose reality was magnificently prefigured and revealed in the myriad of historic details. This idealism provided the means of shaping history and Scripture alike in the image of premillennial assumptions. History was knowable to any who would “step back” and observe its obvious and ordered course. The Bible, in turn, provided historical facts and typical parameters by which history’s meaning and course might be deciphered. These combined to provide what Albury held was a wholly objective, scientific, and irrefutable panorama of the world, theology, and the Bible.

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<sup>22</sup> My thought here has been shaped by Karl Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism*, (London: Routledge, 1997) and C. S. Lewis, “Historicism,” in *Christian Reflections*, ed. by Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1995), pp. 100-113.

<sup>23</sup> Karl Barth, *Protestant Thought From Rousseau to Ritschl* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), especially pp. 118-149. Henry Chadwick, Introduction to *Lessing’s Theological Writings*, ed. by H. Chadwick (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1956). Henry E. Allison, *Lessing and the Enlightenment* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1966).

Albury's teleological assumptions, conjoined to their literal-typical hermeneutic, created a specific philosophy of history which reflected these ideas. This philosophy began with a neo-platonic ideal. Through *The Morning Watch*, historical events are seen as figural representations of Trinitarian reality, as Albury held that every event had its prior conception within the mind of God and the inner relations of the Trinity. History and the doctrine of God become entwined; the former revealing the latter whose reality was manifest within it. But this makes revelation then a predicate of history, for history and the inner nature or relationship of God become causally connected, the latter effecting the former through a divinely mechanistic process. In this perspective, the conditional nature of revelation is strictly maintained. The "progression" of relational activity within the Trinity, automatically manifests in a temporal progression, giving history, at each constituent point, and particularly in its unified course and culmination, a revelatory value.

Irving's own Reformed tradition had long held that the economy of salvation revealed the three persons of the Trinity, reflecting the inner Trinitarian dynamic of personhood and relationship. But Albury went beyond this, assigning to the immanent Trinity, a mechanistic correspondence to time, in which the inner Trinitarian relationship and interaction are inevitably and necessarily manifested within the historical fabric. The difference between these two perspectives is profound. Where the one would begin from the nature of God as revealed, drawing from this revelation the meaning of history and creation, Albury sought to isolate or center the meaning of history in history itself, deducing from the accidents of history the nature and will of God. But in Irving's Reformed tradition, there is no mechanistic connection between the acts of the immanent Trinity and history, and thus the progress of history and its key points, as history, is never seen to reflect a divine reality. Instead, history becomes the arena in which God's temporal mission occurs, revealing the relational nature of God even as it reconciles us to God and makes us full participants of that relationship. True, "the temporal missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit necessarily disclose the inner life of the Trinity itself."<sup>24</sup> But what is revealed is not a progression of intent but a dynamic of relationship, not

connected to history, but outside of time and thus independent of all history's structures, progressions, and laws. This revelation has its center and content in that relational reality, the effect of knowing a person not deductions drawn from history. The concrete work of the Son and the Spirit, manifested in time, reflect the relational character or nature of God even as they make possible and create our own participation with that reality. Knowledge belongs to God and exists as he reveals. Scientific knowledge of the contingent order is deducible from that order. But knowledge of the eternal, and more particularly, God's intended will for creation is not deducible from the contingent order and thus history does not, *in itself*, reveal the will or work of God. Revelation occurs as the unprecedented, in history but not equated with or bound to its process. Thus revelation, while historically real is not deducible from history but depends wholly on the act of God who makes himself known in time and space. *The Morning Watch*, in spite of its distrust of science, seeks to deduce meaning from history using a scientific paradigm. Historical events are given a divine meaning through analogy and correspondence, determined by a doctrinal presupposition.

These principles are more clearly seen in the approach to the incarnation. The resurrection, and in a sense, perhaps, the whole incarnation, is history in complete unconditionality. Neither its factuality nor meaning is, in any sense, contingent upon prior events nor derived from any single temporal cause or composite of them across time. In the event of Christ's rising, the "facts" of the event become identical with the One who in them is giving himself and thus being made known. To view this, as the Albury Circle did, as one point within, or even the initiation of, an epoch, might make it unique and even crucial. But its actual character would be radically changed. Torn from its position as theological center it is re-clothed as an element of cognitive knowledge that must be perceived, interpreted and placed within the larger scheme. But within the Reformed tradition, the incarnation is far more than a point within a continuum, regardless of importance, for it signifies not continuity but an entirely new reality, not the meaning of history as history, but the Divine judgment and redemption of history from One utterly distinct and outside it. The incarnation is not a step in the progress toward the eschaton

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<sup>24</sup> Thomas G. Weinandy, *The Father's Spirit of Sonship: Reconceiving the Trinity* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995),

but the revelation of its eternal character even at this its initiation, and as such the removal of the old order for the new. *The Morning Watch*, through its philosophy of history, posited the incarnation as a point within a chronological continuum, isolating its greatest reality from the life of the church. The concept of relationship had been lost, the Word being replaced by "the letter," not of the moral law but a law of chronological progression.

While the journal could testify, "Yea, all that can be known of God, is exhibited in Christ,"<sup>25</sup> this axiom was effectively ignored as the system they developed actually denies this principle. As seen earlier, the Watchmen held "that faithful interpretation forceth us to find greater personages, and more important events, than those of ancient Jewish history, in these prophetic chronicles."<sup>26</sup> After mentioning Rev. 2:27, 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12; and Col. 1:27, Irving states:

if the new truth, contained in the Scriptures which were written after the day of Pentecost, were to be expressed in our word, it would be this, 'That the mystery of God in the Christ is not completed in one person, Jesus of Nazareth, but in many persons, — Jesus and the elect; the head and the members; the second Adam, and his seed elected in him before the beginning of the word, and no gathering up into him from all the ends of the earth, through all generations, until the fixed and determinate portion shall have been completed.'<sup>27</sup>

The Albury Circle's hermeneutical system, in spite of their best intentions, had led to the separation of faith from its necessary Christological source, changing its nature from communal and relational to noetic, propositional, and historicist. For *The Morning Watch* revelation occurred in the "acts of God outwardly manifested."<sup>28</sup> But their *a priori* assumptions and Neo-Platonic historicism forced these "acts," to reflect nothing beyond their prophetic expectation and the doctrinal and exegetical requirements of the premillennial system. All events were understood to be revelatory but the nature, degree, and value of this revelation was determined not by its relation to its Christological object but its perceived place in the larger prophetic system and particu-

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p. 5.

<sup>25</sup> *TMW* II:806.7—December 1830. A statement that more precisely reflected Albury's actual perspective might read, "all that can be known of God, is exhibited in history."

<sup>26</sup> *TMW* IV:53.9—September 1831. See Ch. 2.

<sup>27</sup> *TMW* III:301.6—June 1831.

larly through the insight it provides on the last days. Albury's methodology led the Circle to see revelation in everything and to draw from this revelation everything they expected to see.

In his first article in the journal, Irving announced, "Unto that common form, I say of human reason which pertaineth to man as man, hath God inscribed his revealed word; and the man who is most exorcised in the largeness and commonness of reason, and least conversant with the peculiarities of a school, of a class, or of a nation, is the man upon whom the word of God, in the hands of the Holy Spirit, will produce the largest and truest effect."<sup>29</sup> Irving and his Circle saw themselves as objective interpreters of God's revelation, unbiased and free of sectarian taint. In fact, there were few whose labours were more controlled by the presuppositions and prejudices they brought to their interpretive and theological work. The entire premillennial system developed at Albury was built upon the Circle's errant postulates that the Second Advent was impending and this event was the focal point of Scripture and oft prefigured consummation of history. Certitude of a coming apocalypse, skepticism of every human institution and labour, and a passion built upon the perceived importance and divinity of their own labours, combined to create a hermeneutic and doctrinal system consonant with their presuppositions.

The malleable nature of prophecy and the literal-typical hermeneutic allowed the Circle to shape scripture and history into any form. Events, places, and prophecies are appealed to as literal realities while the interpretation, in reality, takes a highly subjective form, shaped to meet the author's own polemical, emotional, or dogmatic need. In *The Morning Watch* Babylon can refer to Rome,<sup>30</sup> the Church of Scotland,<sup>31</sup> all of Christendom,<sup>32</sup> and even the source and symbol of science<sup>33</sup> as polemical needs dictate. Evangelicalism is described as the antitypical fulfillment of "fat King Eglon," the oppressor of

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<sup>28</sup> *TMW* VII:52.6-March 1833.

<sup>29</sup> *TMW* I:14.3-March 1829.

<sup>30</sup> *TMW* II:731.8-December 1830. See also the article "The Fall of Babylon," *TMW* V pp. 50-77.

<sup>31</sup> *TMW* VI:224.7-September 1832.

<sup>32</sup> *TMW* I:703.6-December 1830; *TMW* VII:74.5-March 1833; *TMW* VII 184.1-March 1833.

Israel,<sup>34</sup> the kingdom of Moab,<sup>35</sup> the “drunkards of Ephraim,”<sup>36</sup> the coalition surrounding Sanballat,<sup>37</sup> the Pharisees<sup>38</sup> and even “Popish doctrine.”<sup>39</sup> In time, almost and every enemy or adversary is identified with its biblical type and made to reflect last day’s realities. The prominent nations of the world, political events, and important personages were also assigned a type and placed within the teleological choreography. Yet never are any of these portrayed as anything less than the literal and unbiased reading of the text.<sup>40</sup>

Under the controlling influence of their apocalyptic vision the simple meaning of biblical texts too are completely revised to conform within the premillennial system.

The promise of our Lord to the thief (Luke xxiii. 43) cannot be rightly translated in our version. That the entire man could on that day be in the state or place of eternal blessedness and reward with the entire Christ is impossible, because Christ did not enter it till he rose from the grave on the third day; and the man can not do it till the resurrection, seeing that the body is indispensable to that blessedness.<sup>41</sup>

Inconsistent with premillennial doctrine that denied any resurrection would occur prior to Christ’s “epiphany or coming in the clouds,”<sup>42</sup> the traditional—and literal—reading is here described as “impossible.” In fact, the literal reading, for all its alleged precedence in the interpretive process, is applied arbitrarily within the premillennial system, as the need, not the text, requires. Where a literal interpretation contradicts premillennial doctrine its meaning was said to be symbolical. For example, while the temple prophesied by Ezekiel was expected to see a literal fulfillment in the millennium, the

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<sup>33</sup> *TMW* VII:371.7–June 1833. Cf. “Records of the Religions and Science of Babylon,” *TMW* VI pp. 181–212.

<sup>34</sup> *TMW* VII:251.7—June 1833. See Judges 3:17.

<sup>35</sup> *TMW* VI:290.9f. No attempt is made in the journal to reconcile the fact that Evangelicalism is typified in both Moab and Eglon king of *Ammon*, a nation that Albury saw as the type of the Church of Scotland.

<sup>36</sup> *TMW* III:475.7. See Isaiah 28:1–3.

<sup>37</sup> *TMW* VII:257.2. See Nehemiah 2:10, 19; 4:1; 6:1f; and 13:28.

<sup>38</sup> *TMW* II:547.6—September 1830.

<sup>39</sup> *TMW* I:720.2; II:919.8.

<sup>40</sup> That this has remained an incommutable characteristic of imminent adventism in every age is hardly deniable. While detailed illustrations lie beyond the space of this study, copious examples may be found in Boyer, *When Time Shall be Know More*, Daniel Wojcik, *The End of the World as We Know it: Faith Fatalism, and Apocalypse in America* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), C. Marvin Pate and Calvin B. Haines, Jr., *Doomsday Delusions: What’s Wrong with Predicting the End of the World* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 1995) and Richard Kyle, *op. cit.*

<sup>41</sup> *TMW* II:757.9—December 1830.

<sup>42</sup> *TMW* IV:323.5—December 1831.



river the prophet saw flowing from it is said to be symbolical and therefore not expected to be literally fulfilled.<sup>43</sup> Attempts to find deeper prophetic meanings in the text often led the Circle to overlook its simple and obvious meaning. Thus the phrase ἦν δὲ ἕγγυς ἡ ἑορτὴ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἡ σκηνοπηγία<sup>44</sup> is torn from its context and used as a reference to an imminent epiphany. Through the whole of *The Morning Watch*, examples of Albury's shaping scripture to describe, defend, or prove their premillennial expectations, abound.

For *The Morning Watch*, the implications of their hermeneutic went beyond the subjective reading of history and Scripture. Having allowed for revelation to occur with relative uniformity in a multiplicity of events and times, it was no significant leap to include the natural order and the human creature within the matrix of divine revelation. As early as its second year, *The Morning Watch*, could see Scripture, Christian doctrine, historical events, creation, and personal experience combine in a single, harmonious witness to the acts and nature of God: "We would now endeavour to trace out, how every doctrine of the Gospel, and every experience of the believer's soul, is shewn forth in some great fact in the history of the world; that there is, in short, a world within us corresponding to the world without us."<sup>45</sup> This exhibits the romanticism of its day, and the popular belief that "in all things finite the infinite is present, latent, and the part is meaningless without the whole."<sup>46</sup> It is also consistent with the ever more inclusive reach of the premillennial system. In time, even human nature came to be seen as revelatory: "As it is the glorious endowment of man to have been originally formed in the likeness of God, and to be capable of renewal after the image of Him that created him;

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<sup>43</sup> *TMW* IV:153.7—September 1831. At 154.6 the author denies the "sea of glass" a literal meaning, saying it is "figurative" and since sea is never spoken of as blessed in the Bible it must actually refer to lake of fire. In spite of how they railed against those who "spiritualize" the Bible, one must ask how their symbolical interpretations are really any different?

<sup>44</sup> *TMW* I: 1:42.8—March 1829. John 7:2. Some verses are completely removed from any historical or literary context, and made to point well beyond themselves. See for example the use of Hag. 2:18 at *TMW* I:42.4.

<sup>45</sup> *TMW* II:7.3—March 1830. Anonymous (but probably John Tudor). "The Gospel: Creation prepared for, Providence unfolds it."

<sup>46</sup> Bernard M. G. Reardon, *Religion in the Age of Romanticism: Studies in early Nineteenth Century Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) p. See Ch. 1.

so may we, by reflecting on our own nature, apprehend much of the Divine nature.”<sup>47</sup> But this only served to move the Albury Circle further from the center of Christian tradition. The effectual eclipsing of Christ, begun with the historicist hermeneutic, was magnified as the center of revelation shifted from the temporal order to the individual. After stating that God may be known by the Christian through creation, the world outside himself, one author suggests a more certain course: “but in the world within himself, that microcosm, that epitome of the creation of God, man may best learn of his Creator: he is himself the image of the invisible God, and is destined in the coming time to manifest the glory of God, as his vicegerent over the whole creation.” This is a remarkable statement. It again attests to the romantic—and premillennial—axiom that “in all things finite the Infinite is present,” and has here located the focal point of the precept in the human creature. It is by reflecting on our own nature that “man may best learn of his Creator” and “apprehend much of the Divine nature.” Remarkably this is justified through the use of one of the New Testament’s greatest Christological verses—Col. 1:15—here stripped of its biblical intent and context and made to describe, not Christ, but the character of human nature. Sources of revelation expanded from history to include such sources as the natural world, personal experience, numerology, and Babylonian zodiacs.<sup>48</sup> All were held as certain and infallible and placed within the prophetic witness as elements of its single narrative. And all were defended as being the obvious conclusions of a literal reading of the Bible, central tenets of Christianity, and necessary objects of faith.

Revelation, when made a predicate of history, allows history to bear any shape deemed necessary by one’s doctrinal presuppositions. Inevitably, this leads to revelation taking a decidedly narcissistic and subjective form. For the Circle, the historical events perceived as most revealing were those of their own time and particularly those that re-

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<sup>47</sup> *TMW* VI 233.5-September 1832. John Tudor, “The Language of Heaven.”

volved around themselves. Certain that their day marked the end of the age, Irving and his Circle saw themselves as the focal point of God's work, called as last day's interpreters who alone had discerned the meaning of the times and the prophetic word. The gifts of the Spirit manifesting in Scotland and then Regent Square, only confirmed their assumptions. In *The Morning Watch* we see Albury's search for God as a reaching beyond themselves—or deep within themselves—and thus extending to the category of revelation their own presuppositions and postulates raised to the level of the ultimate. Positing an imminent Second Advent and establishment of the premillennial kingdom, Irving and the Circle proceeded to portray this as the essence of the Divine mind, the goal of all God's labours, and the product of historical progress wherein his will was manifested. But in so doing, God's revealed will and work became nothing more than the extension of Albury's ultimate concerns, deified. As such, they become, in essence, idols, as the deity was transformed into the "guarantor, the protector of [their] political order, [their] spiritual and intellectual values, [their] longing, and [their] need to analyze the world."<sup>49</sup>

The practical effect of Albury's premillennial hermeneutic was profound. Legitimate ministries, churches, and individuals around them, were, in their refusal to accept the premillennial system, defined as weak in faith, apostate, and ultimately part of Antichrist's intentions and reign. Having exchanged a biblical concept of faith for foundationalist certitude, established through the hermeneutical and historicist process, Albury was able to build a vast all encompassing system through which every event and verse could find correlation and interpretation. It was a system that offered truth in culturally normative terms, rational, discursive and axiomatic, beautiful in its sublimity. But the premillennial hermeneutic tends toward revelational relativism. Having thus replaced Christ Jesus, Albury turned, subconsciously yet nevertheless, to an alternative center, its own hermeneutic and the prophetic system it created.

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<sup>49</sup> In the journal's final issues, increasing amounts of space were devoted to the study of ancient calendars and chronological synchronization. "On the Ancient Chaldean and Egyptian Chronology," VI:161-180; "Records of the Religion and Science of Babylon," VI:181-212, John Tudor; "On the Hemaic Records," VI:389-404, I. Cullimore; "The Records of Babylon and Egypt," VI:405-417, anonymous; "Of Chinese Sexagenary Cycle and Astronomical System of Time, and the Authenticity of the Early History of China," VII:161-176, I. Cullimore; "On the Chaldean and Oriental Zodiacs," VII:208-220, anonymous; "On the Arrow-Headed Characters of Nineveh and Babylon," VII:365-384, anonymous; "On the Origin of the Primitive Sphere of the Greeks," VII:385-390, I. Cullimore. These articles fill roughly 128 pages, approximately 15% of the journal's content between 1832-33.

(2) More than Just a Different End:  
Adventist Teleology and Eschatology

Albury's idealistic presuppositions led to a decidedly different approach to understanding eschatology. The conclusions they reached were not the result of an over emphasis upon eschatology but in the fact that they were not eschatological enough. Or, to put it another way, making a helpful distinction: Albury's was a material "eschatology," an end of a dispensation, not of time, the in-breaking of a new age in time, not eternity as its dialectical "other." Albury's approach was never an account of eternity intersecting time in the person of Jesus, but was instead a theory of the earth's next phase. Its interest lay not in the ultimate and eternal, but the penultimate and very temporal millennial dispensation of creation. This material emphasis makes for more than just a different end. Albury's premillennial "eschatology" represents a significantly different approach to theology in method and conclusions and leads to serious doctrinal revision as its definition is drawn not from a Christology centered upon the incarnation, but the premillennial ideal. The approach taken through *The Morning Watch* should therefore be carefully distinguished from a more biblical and Christocentric eschatology. The material and temporal nature of Albury's perspective suggests it be more accurately described as an adventist teleology rather than eschatology. For the Second Advent of Jesus ushers in not the eschaton, but a teleon, the continuation of a particular reality through epochal event rather than the dissolution of that reality by coming of one completely different.

(a) *The Unconditioned Nature of Eschatology*

The distinctions between Albury's adventist teleology and biblical eschatology are numerous. At the most fundamental level, adventist teleology differs from biblical eschatology primarily by its conditional nature. Regardless of detail, the emphasis of the adventist teleology always lies in the progress, continuity (or discontinuity), and goal of the "world" and its history, through which the nature of the eschaton to come is determined. The shape then is conditioned not by the Christ event, but the "world" and its

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<sup>40</sup> Weber, *Foundations*, I:215.5.

perceived or expected course. This may be rationally argued—as in early editions of *The Morning Watch*, or more experientially and supernaturally expressed, as in its later editions. In any case, events, situations, and even manifestations of the Holy Spirit, become the experience of that which is conditioned by the world and are thus made subject to its interpretation as the result of something else. The miraculous nature of the gifts of power do not change this any more than the supernatural shaping of history by God. For in both, the interpretation and meaning are found not in Christ and revelation focused upon his incarnation, but in the “world,” through its history, people, or events. This gives Christian doctrine, a decidedly relative character, as it is always discerned in correspondence—antithetically or synthetically—to temporal and material realities. Throughout *The Morning Watch*, the “end” is conditioned by the details and progress of that which precedes it and exists as the antithesis or product of that reality and thus relative to it.

But this contradicts the decidedly eschatological perspective of the New Testament. “That aspect of faith in Jesus Christ which can most easily be recognized as eschatological is the experience of that which is unconditioned.”<sup>50</sup> Faith does not exist out of the world, but in response to God’s self-giving of himself in the incarnation. This self-giving is in no way a product of the world, or the consequence of process of historical progression, even where these are understood as divinely ordained. It exists as something which has broken in from without, something completely unconditioned by the course of history and undetermined by either the merits or evil of humanity. The unconditional nature of the incarnation reveals the same character is to be expected in the second Advent which likewise will come as free act, unconditioned and undetermined by the course of history or any act, great or small, within it. This is the intent behind Karl Barth’s oft quoted statement, “revelation is not the predicate of history; history is the predicate of revelation.” To speak of eschatology in terms different from what one already has said in Christology, soteriology, or interpretation of the Gospel is to render this element of dogmatics an irrelevant appendix to the whole. Thus, the very nature of

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<sup>50</sup> Weber, *Foundations*, p. II:658.

the Gospel—and thus eschatology that is derived from the Gospel—must remain completely unconditioned by temporal realities.

*(b) Adventist Teleology and Eschatology*

The distinction between the conditional nature of adventist teleology and the unconditioned nature of eschatology work out in detail to create a variety of differences, the first being diverse perspectives of the nature of time and God's revelation within it. In the teleological system of the Albury Circle, time is equated or identified with history, while revelation becomes that which is gleaned from history's discerned goal and the temporal details and progress by which it is attained. Any "decision" for the truth, be it the acceptance of the prophetic worldview, the carnal nature of the church, or the two-natures of Christ, is made as a response to facts gained through the observation of historical events, their interconnection through a law of temporal progression, and the conjectured ultimate toward which these facts point. In the adventist teleology of *The Morning Watch*, there exists a certain continuity between created time and eternity. As we have seen, this continuity extends to include the Godhead: "In short, throughout all Scripture his actings in time are only the manifestations of purposes and actings which went on among Persons of the blessed Trinity before all time."<sup>51</sup> Time-history becomes an image or pattern of the inner relationships within the Godhead. The Bible offers a key to interpreting this history, for "the instructions are given in the Scriptures; which those who read the signs of the times may see fulfilling under our eye, and telling the wise to prepare for the immediate coming of the Lord."<sup>52</sup> Revelation is thus bound to time as cognitive facts deduced from the analysis of history. The "decision" of faith then becomes a response conditioned by the nature of historical progression, its proper assessment and interpretation, and thus a conclusion of human speculation and category of human knowledge.

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<sup>51</sup> *TMW* III:59.6—March 1831. Edward Irving. cf. I:418.5; I:698f.

<sup>52</sup> *TMW* VI:100.8—September 1832. John Tudor.

Conversely, biblical eschatology (arguably) and Reformed eschatology (certainly) sharply distinguishes between history and time. Time exists as the created arena in which the progress of history unfolds, while history becomes a “possibility” realized in time, yet without commandeering time by becoming its sole content or essence. Revelation too occurs in time, but remains utterly unconditioned by history, bringing into time another reality, a new history. This decision is not grounded upon the course, progress, or nature of history within time, but the reconciling act of God who reveals another reality centered upon his triune nature. Time and history are not equated but express different realities and their distinction is crucial if one is to allow God’s act and the human response of faith to be in time, without being conditioned by it. Further, this distinction delivers history from any necessary correlation with revelation, allowing it to be centered upon the act of God in time while wholly undetermined by any act of time on God. Christian faith then occurs as a response in time to the One who has concretely called and acted, from a reality so separate as to render the act and response, whose validity is never proven, ascertained, or demonstrated by the course of history, the beginning of a new history within time (II Cor. 5:17!). Faith, in response to the person and claim of Jesus of Nazareth, is the opening of oneself to the possibility of a new course or movement within time, a new history lived among all other histories, personal or corporate, yet utterly distinct from them. Faith is the response to God’s unconditioned—and thus utterly free and gracious—call.<sup>53</sup>

This new reality is itself eschatologically defined, in that its nature is unconditioned by any aspect of the created order, including the progress of history or conclusions regarding its nature. It exists by the actual giving of that which is from without, through a very temporal and concrete act of God. Revelation becomes the cognitive aspect of God’s self-giving and thus redeeming act. This act in time reveals, not a particular course, progress, or goal of history, but eternity, broken into time as something categorically different. “It is that temporal dimension, which in qualitative distinction to the

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<sup>53</sup> Biblical illustrations abound and a brief sampling could include: Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3; 15:1-6; 17:1-9; 18:1ff); Jacob (Gen. 28:10-17; 32:22-32); Moses (Exodus 3); Isaiah (Isaiah 6); Matthew (Mt. 9:9); Nathaniel (Jn. 1:47-51) and Paul (Acts 9).

course of time, carries authentic validity within itself and brings to us that which is valid.”<sup>54</sup> This is markedly different than the perspective of *The Morning Watch*.

In the theology of *The Morning Watch*, the equating of time, history and revelation, and the consequential historicism, led the Circle to define their “eschatology” through protological parameters. In spite of their interest in the primitive church they believed God’s purpose in their day was not to be identified with a restoration of the apostolic age, but something far more temporally remote. “With a joy like this, man’s being began; when Adam, the image of God, held unabashed communion with his Creator. . . . And this primeval joy we delight to contemplate, and instinctively crave.”<sup>55</sup> This joy and communion was the premillennial hope, as creation’s final epoch physically manifests that which was intended at the start. Creation began with God’s desire to create a people unto himself. The Fall did not destroy this plan but necessitated a means of redemption through which God more powerfully demonstrated and revealed his nature and grace.<sup>56</sup> If creation represents divine intent, the millennial kingdom is its fulfillment, a fact confirmed by Albury in their identifying the type of the millennial Sabbath not with the Mosaic Sabbath, but the original Creation Sabbath.<sup>57</sup> To Albury’s credit, they did not see the millennium as a restoration of Eden or some primeval and innocent state. Nor on the other hand did they see the pre-fallen creation as in some way the first step in a process that, without the fall, would have ended in a kingdom identical to that looked for in the millennium. Nevertheless, the millennium represented a different but correlative fulfillment of God’s original goal in creation, allowing a single purpose and narrative to exist through time, from creation to the coming thousand-year reign of Christ in the New Jerusalem.

Here again one sees the differences between Albury’s adventist, material teleology and eschatology. The emphasis of *The Morning Watch* is intentionally separated from the eternal or heavenly, concepts that Albury saw as too vague and distant to be of

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<sup>54</sup> Weber, *Foundations*, p. 11:661.

<sup>55</sup> *TMW* IV:2.5—September 1831. “There Remaineth a Rest to the People of God.”

<sup>56</sup> This is explained in “God Shall be All in All”, *TMW* IV:239-51.

<sup>57</sup> *TMW* IV:2.9.



any practical comfort or help. "The error respecting the nature and situation of heaven is part and parcel of their losing sight of the only object held up in Scripture for the church's hope; namely the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to this earth, and the purposes for which he comes."<sup>58</sup> It was not an ethereal and abstract heaven that had captivated the Circle, but a redeemed and transformed earth. The eschaton is interpreted in strongly material terms as the created order is restored to original intent, through historical processes being moved to a divinely intended goal. But this reflects not just a material but also a temporal delineation as creation and millennial kingdom are seen as antipodal points of earth's history. The coming kingdom is understood as an element of the created order, a last step in the progression of time as God brings "heaven" to earth. Interpreting II Cor. 12:2-4, the pseudonymous writer "Fidus," suggests that heaven is progressive and temporal: "The third heaven therefore is paradise, or פֶּדֶס. Now, it can be the third heaven only in one or both of the two respects,—that of place or that of time. For the former there is no warrant in Scripture. . . . But for the latter there is a warrant in Scripture."<sup>59</sup> This writer goes on to describe these as the past world destroyed by water, the present world awaiting destruction by fire, and the third, the future and coming paradise. Yet in all this there is no sense of eternity standing against or over time as something completely different. All this emphasizes the difference between eschatology and adventist teleology that posits an eschaton as merely the opposite end of a linear progression that had its beginning at creation. Albury's "eschatology" is far more aptly described as a materialist teleology, as its interest lay in the progression toward, and nature of, the last epoch of creation rather than the shape, reality, and influence of God's reality outside and utterly distinct from time.

The distinction between a "conditioned" adventist teleology and an "unconditioned" eschatology is further seen in the concepts of grace and judgment. Albury had come to define faith as belief in the millennial system. This includes as its object, not just God, or the Trinity and triune nature of God, or the incarnation and cross, but the

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<sup>58</sup> *TMW* III:372.5—June 1831.

<sup>59</sup> *TMW* II:759.1—December 1830. "Commentary on the Seven Apocalyptic Churches." "Fidus." The Hebrew word, in the form here, occurs only once (Song 4:13), where it is translated "orchard." Perhaps הַפְּדִים (Neh. 2:8) or פְּדִים (Ecc. 2:5) would be more accurate.

progression of history and its dispensational philosophy, prophetic nature of the Bible, and ultimately, the nature of the Kingdom and its prophetic types and historical antecedents. Faith without these elements was considered by Albury as insufficient: "the knowledge of doctrine which in ordinary times suffices for saving faith, will not suffice to save in times like these, which will require knowledge of every kind."<sup>60</sup> In *The Morning Watch* judgment is the result or consequence of a weak or non-existent faith specifically defined by the failure to accept or believe the premillennial return of Christ and its corresponding doctrines.

Once again, this perspective contradicts eschatology as understood in the New Testament and Irving's Reformed tradition. Here judgment and grace are understood or expressed in dialectical terms, as two aspects of the single event of the incarnation, and especially its revelatory center, the cross and resurrection. Here God's turn to humanity, completely unconditioned by any individual or corporate merit or historical progression, is utterly a work of grace. But in its coming, in the fact of our need of it, and the reality of its rejection in the quest for autonomy, humanity is judged. The light of the Gospel of Christ at once unveils God's gracious love for the world and act to reconcile it to himself, even as it discloses the magnitude of human rebellion and concupiscence. Faith itself is seen to have an eschatological character as it exists as response to God's act of self-giving, accepting as valid both the word of judgment and the word of grace, his unconditioned No! and Yes!, and thereby enter life eternal.

### (3) Faith Redefined

In addition to their subjectivist historicism and materialist teleology, Albury's premillennialism may be critiqued for its redefining the nature, object, and content of the Christian faith. For closely related to the materialist teleology that strips history of any truly eternal character is a faith based upon coordinable elements in a proto-foundationalist structure. Or to put it another way, a materialistic understanding of his-

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<sup>60</sup> *TMW* 1:542.7—December 1829.

tory will, in turn, create a materialistic faith isolated from any actual work of God and thus incongruent with the very meaning of faith in both Scripture and church tradition.

The Albury Circle, under the shaping influence of both romanticism and modernity, sought through prophecy what later theology endeavoured through the Quest for the Historical Jesus. Both represent an attempt to reconcile different statements of doctrine that are, historically speaking, either coordinable or incoordinable, and find in this reconciliation a foundation upon which the Christian faith may be established. The Quest for the Historical Jesus endeavoured to show how the coordinable aspects of the Creed—suffered under Pontius Pilate, crucified, dead, and buried—functioned as a demonstration of the incoordinable—Christ, the Son of God, conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary. As the Quest sought to give the “historical Jesus” as “the foundation and the standard for contemporary faith in Christ”<sup>61</sup> so Albury offered prophecy, and its fulfillment as a base from which the coordinable, demonstrated as assured, may give credibility to that which is historically “incoordinable.” Even more, that which is “incoordinable” can be used, in turn, to interpret the “coordinable.” In both cases, faith is established upon “history,” being made dependent upon the categories of specific philosophies of history. But faith that seeks its veracity in what is historically “coordinable,” intentionally turns from an eternal to a temporal basis. This created in both, the Quest for the historical Jesus and Albury’s premillennialism, a redefinition of the meaning of faith. In the case of the Quest, this led to a liberalism that focused upon Jesus as teacher of “eternal values” or the exemplary “personal life” through which his ethical teachings were expressed. In Albury’s premillennialism, this resulted in a focus on “kingdom realities,” the ethic, politic, religion, and characteristic of the millennial kingdom. But in both, right and left, fundamental and liberal, an attempt is made to establish the validity and verity of eternal truths upon the “facts” of history from which are derived the practice and faith of the Christian religion.

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<sup>61</sup> Weber, *Foundations*, p. 11:85.

Albury's understanding of faith produced a "crystallization of divine truth into systematic form."<sup>62</sup> Their premillennial hermeneutic and the doctrinal system that emerged from it combined to form a prophetic scholasticism in which faith became little different than rational certitude. The Second Advent of Christ, the restoration of the Jews, the coming millennial kingdom, as well as the prophecies that foresaw them and the typologies that prefigured them, were described in propositional terms. Every aspect of history, each verse in Scripture, became a cog in a great machine grinding towards a final product. Faith was understood as the correct grasp of the system, its components, their interdependence, and its teleological intent.

But one must ask if this is not a fundamentally different understanding of faith than biblically or traditionally understood. Certainly within the Reformed tradition, Christian faith is, by definition, faith in Christ. It is an attitude and relation to a particular person expressed in obedience, trust, and surrender. Its interest in objective issues must never be primary, but existing only as it encounters these in the person of Jesus Christ. It is always, in the first instance, the relating to a Thou and not an It, a person not a proposition. This is not a denial of the reality or truth of propositional statements. Indeed, faith has always to do with objective issues propositionally stated. But these must never be allowed to become the center or object of faith. Christian faith is never faith "in Christianity" or Christian dogma. While these may follow, they remain contingent upon faith properly centered, that trust in a living person in whom God personally encounters the human creature. Faith "deals continually with propositions and views because it has to do with Jesus Christ as a person."<sup>63</sup> Change in this order comes only at the cost of a metamorphosis to the biblical concept of faith.

This relational perspective of faith presupposes and affirms the communion of persons, Divine and human. Faith exists as a response to the Word. It is the self-surrender and thus act of one person in response to another. Faith in these terms cannot be equated with the merely noetic acceptance of rational arguments regardless of the

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<sup>62</sup> David F. Wells, "An American Evangelical Theology," in *Evangelicalism and Modern America*, George Marsden, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), p. 86. Wells is describing that approach taken by Protestant scholasticism.

<sup>63</sup> Otto Weber, *Foundations of Dogmatics*, I:7.

force of their facts or breadth of their witness. Faith, as understood in the Christian tradition, exists before the viable possibility of its opposite, as the risk-filled giving of one's self in trusting surrender to another. As an actual encounter, it occurs in time and becomes, in a unique sense, a historical reality. But only in this. Its historical reality, because it is an eschatological reality, exists as a point of intersection rather than parallel or intertwined realities. God's encounter with the human creature, through Christ, represents a time in which eternity "happens." The historic aspect of faith is not the acceptance of a spiritual substratum of divine purpose or the acceptance of a specific—even Christological—meaning of history, but a temporal reality by which history is given meaning through the meeting of Jesus Christ and his history which has become our history. This act in time is "unhistorical" in that nothing in time necessarily warrants or anticipates it nor are we "able to speculate about it after the fact."<sup>44</sup>

Faith then may be said to have four essential characteristics. First, it exists as relational communion with the person of Christ. Its *primary* interest lies not in objective issues of either historical or prophetic fact or upon doctrinal truths regardless of veracity, but in personal relationship. Second, while the creed may properly follow the confession, *credo*, the object of faith, is not in or centered upon doctrinal propositions but a person. Third, Christian faith is a personal act of one person in response to the efficacious call of a sovereign Other. And finally, it is temporal, confronting the human creature in time but neither removing them from it or making this time (or its progress) the interest of faith or conduit of revelation.

It was these very elements that the hermeneutic of *The Morning Watch* effectively annulled. Throughout the journal, faith is inferred in terms of a noetic assent to a system, its progress and ultimate conclusion, and the objective truths of God revealed through its unfolding. As such, faith is necessarily bound to the literal/typological hermeneutic and its philosophy of history that was understood by Albury as a *sine qua non* of mature faith. While false or weak faith is frequently denounced and decried and true faith noted and extolled, each is delineated and assessed in terms of objective content

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<sup>44</sup> Otto Weber, *Foundations of Dogmatics*, I:8. See also Karl Barth *Romans*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition, trans. By Edwyn C. Hoskyns (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 29ff. and Bruce McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically, Real-*

properly or improperly accepted. Faith, in *The Morning Watch*, was understood as the acceptance of such facts as the inspiration of Scripture,<sup>65</sup> the doctrine that Christ “had all our temptations,”<sup>66</sup> and that miracles and healings are possible.<sup>67</sup> But ultimately, faith was defined as the acceptance of the premillennial system, as the second coming was set forth as the “sole object of steadfast [*sic*] faith.”<sup>68</sup> The journal, having begun its life by seeking to bring revival to the church by turning its attention to the prophetic Scriptures, began to define true and saving faith solely in terms of acceptance of the prophetic, i.e. premillennial system.<sup>69</sup> Faith, as understood by the Albury Circle, has become decidedly different than that defined above. The analytical proposition, be it mathematical or historical-philosophical, may be subject to verification but never the object of personal decision and thus faith. To portray prophetic truth as self-evident axioms is to deny its relational, personal, and temporal elements. To define faith, implicitly or explicitly, as the accepting as true of these axioms, is to render faith in terms exactly opposite to that of the Bible Albury sought to uphold.

### 3. Albury’s Design of the Last Days: A Proto-Foundationalist Myth

The Albury Circle was very close to good theology. As Edward Irving put it: “Of God in the abstract we know nothing, literally nothing: we know him only by his

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*istic Dialectical Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 135ff.

<sup>65</sup> See for example *TMW* III: 306.2-June 1831; *TMW* V:261.5-June 1832.

<sup>66</sup> *TMW* V:312.5-June 1832.

<sup>67</sup> *TMW* VI:441.6. others are needed here

<sup>68</sup> *TMW* IV:253.6-Dec. 1831. Cf also: “We are about to avail ourselves of distinctions so nice, and varieties of expression so minute, that none but those who have full faith in the inspiration of Scripture can or will follow us satisfactorily, still less attain to the conviction at which we have arrived from this minute study of the infallible word of God. . . .” (*TMW* V:261.5-June 1832). And again, from Edward Irving: “Until I learned to think better, I also was held in the error that the prophecies in particular, and the Old-Testament Scriptures in general, were but histories, and anticipations of events, with which we have little to do, save to glean out of them certain texts, to be used in accommodation to the times and persons in the midst of which we live. From this most unworthy and unholy idea of the Divine word having got delivered by the grace of God, I am desirous to deliver others; for so long as it remains, the faith of the inspiration of the Scriptures is a mere pretense” (*TMW* III:306.2-June 1831).

<sup>69</sup> See *TMW* I:114.9, 116.5; II:784.9.

acts.”<sup>70</sup> Or again: “Christ is now both subject and object, both cause and effect, both Creator and Creature, in his one person.”<sup>71</sup> Taken alone, these statements reflect an excellent theological position. God’s word and work are indivisible, his work is understood as revelatory of his nature, and the perspective is clearly Christocentric. But under the pressure of Albury’s premillennialism, these all took a new form. The focus of faith was turned from the person of Christ, the quintessential act of God, toward which every prior act looks and from which every subsequent act receives its meaning, to the acts of God, great and small, centered on Christ or not, in one dispensation or another, spread across time and only together revealing God. In the end, Albury’s hermeneutic rendered it impossible for the heartfelt goals of spiritual revival to find fulfillment. The relativism of history, in making every event revelatory and denying that one event could stand out as uniquely definitive, made it impossible for the contributors to discern between the relative values of particular dogmatic statements. But this new and deeper knowledge was in reality the inevitable consequence of the premillennial hermeneutic. Having effectively removed the relational, personal and temporal aspects from faith, they replaced it with propositional-prophetic concept from which specific Christian doctrines were syllogistically deduced. Having determined that revealed facts occur across time and independent of the person of Christ Jesus, Albury allowed their own worldview, culture, and polemics to define the dogmatic center of the faith and miss the goal they so passionately sought to achieve.

The premillennial system created by Albury is perhaps best described as a proto-foundationalist myth. Here traditional, and even ancient elements, replete with heroic individuals under a divine hand, combine to give a narrative that provides an essential order to their world view, by explaining elements of the natural world and human society—with its history, psychology, customs, or ideals—and uniting them to a course of ultimate meaning.<sup>72</sup> In the midst of a world undergoing rapid and profound change, the

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<sup>70</sup> *TMM* II:111.8—March 1830.

<sup>71</sup> *TMM* II:112.3—March 1830.

<sup>72</sup> My perspective is shaped by definitions found in *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, Third Edition Copyright © 1992 by Houghton Mifflin Company, electronic version licensed from Lemout & Hauspie Speech Products N.V., and *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

men of *The Morning Watch* turned to prophecy to provide order and hope. Upon the premise of the imminent return of Christ, they designed the last days, building a magnificent theological structure, before which their chaotic world received order, design, and meaning. Here the uncertainty of their times, with its revolutions, both violent and cultural, the horror of heresy trials, and the sorrows of death, could all find ultimate meaning. The Circle sought to demonstrate the Bible's prophetic character and verity to a doubting age and the chaotic waves of change sweeping across Britain and Europe. From its first gathering, Albury had concluded that most of the Continent had already foundered, swept from its biblical foundation into the tide of secularism, modernity, democracy, and rationalism. Through the pages of their journal they warned that this swell was rising against Britain. In their first year, John Tudor explained the crisis in terms of teleological realities: "at the close of the Christian dispensation the simple word of God would be less regarded than the traditions and interpretations of men. . . . Among the Germans the authority of the Apocalypse has been questioned by many, and among ourselves symptoms of a doubting spirit have appeared."<sup>73</sup> The irony in this—and perhaps their costliest mistake—was the failure of the Albury Circle to see how their own premillennial hermeneutic was but one more of these "traditions and interpretations of men." While reflecting biblical concepts, their premillennial belief system was built entirely from their presuppositions and shaped by a cultural worldview and their own polemical interests. This combination, imposed upon the Bible, was then proclaimed and defended as the Bible's inherent character. Unknowingly shaped by the modernity they decried, Albury's interpretive and doctrinal system was turned from a Christological to historicist center, thus limiting their message to one of their time but incapable of speaking to it.

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<sup>73</sup> *TMW* I:275.5—September 1829. "On the Apocalypse and the Millennium." John Tudor.



## *Appendices*

### A. Table of Contents of The Morning Watch

The following pages provide the table of contents for each of the seven volumes of *The Morning Watch*. They are reproduced here as a “facsimile,” that is with as close to an identical look and layout as I was able to produce.

*The Morning Watch* was a quarterly journal. The bound volumes contain either four issues (vols. 1 and 2) or two issues (vols. 3-7). Articles that continued across several issues, for example Edward Irving’s “Interpretation of all the Old-Testament Prophecies quoted in the New Testament,” are therefore given four page references, one for each issue of that year.

### B. Chronology of Edward Irving and *The Morning Watch*

This appendix contains a basic chronology designed not only to provide important details in the life of Edward Irving and the Albury Circle, but also to place them within a larger historical context. Irving and the Circle saw their world and time as reflecting a clearly apocalyptic hue. Certainly their day was undergoing rapid and extensive change, as political, social, and economic norms underwent significant revision. The contributors to *The Morning Watch* saw the political revolutions, wars and rumours of wars, sweeping plagues of cholera, and the rise of capitalism as clear proofs that the end was upon them. This chronology seeks to place the significant events surrounding Irving and the Albury Circle within their larger context.

-Appendix A-  
Contents of *The Morning Watch*

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**THE MORNING WATCH**  
Contents of Volume I-1829

---

On the Study of Prophecy .....	I
Interpretation of all the Old-Testament Prophecies quoted in the New Testament .. II, I49, 315, 578	
Explanation of the Term "Times and Seasons" .....	36
On the Duty of studying unfulfilled Prophecy .....	45, 618
On the Visions of Zechariah .....	49
On the First Resurrection .....	62
Doddridge on the Restoration of the Jews .....	71
On the Human Nature of Christ .....	75, 240
On the Doctrine and Manifestation and Character of the Antichristian Apostasy .....	100
Review of the Last Days, By Rev. E. Irving .....	115
Letter to the Editor .....	131
To the Correspondents .....	132
On the Text and Versions of the Holy Scriptures .....	133
On the Priesthood of Christ, as it shall be exercised during and after the Millennium .....	175
Reigning on Earth no Degradation to our Lord .....	180
The Study of Prophecy a Question of Degree .....	184
On the New Covenant .....	187, 354
On God's ultimate revealed Purpose in Creation and New Creation .....	225, 392
On the Theology of the Periodical Journals of the present day .....	243
Letter to the Editor on the First and Second Resurrection .....	267
Remarks on the Period assigned in Scripture for the Restoration of Israel .....	271
To Correspondents .....	272
On the Apocalypse and Millennium .....	273
On the Structure of the Apocalypse .....	292
Recherche sur Dan viii. I3, I4 .....	350
On the true Humanity of Christ .....	421
Defense of the Athanasian Creed .....	446
Review of Sermons by Dr. A. Thomson .....	470, 707
..... of Dr. Arnald on the Roman-Catholic Question .....	496
..... of Rev. Spirit. R. Maitland, on the 1260 Days .....	509
W. D. In reply to Philanastasius .....	518
To Correspondents .....	524
On the gradual Unfolding of Prophecy .....	525
On the Interpretation of the Apocalypse .....	543
An Ancient Jewish Prophecy .....	626
Answer to the Question, What was the Reformation? .....	628
Signs of the Times, and the Characteristics of the Church .....	641
On the separate State .....	666
Review of Rev. E. T. Vaughan's Popular Essays .....	691
On the Heads of the Apocalyptic Beast .....	722
W. D. In reply to the Christian Observer .....	728
Notices of small Works on Prophecy .....	734
To Correspondents .....	735

# *THE MORNING WATCH*

## Contents of Volume II-1830

---

The Gospel: Creation prepared for, Providence unfolds it.....	I
On the Second Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ.....	34
Interpretation of all the Old-Testament Prophecies quoted in the New Testament..	55, 287, 529, 777
On the Typical Import of many of the Historical Records of the Old Testament .....	99, 279
On the Human Nature of Christ (see 192, 196, 197, 216, 928).....	107, 320
Signs of the Times, and the Characteristics of the Church.....	141
Answer to the Question, What Was the Reformation? .....	163
Review of Eagleton's Thoughts on the Covenant of Works, &c.....	171
On Charges brought against the Morning Watch .....	179
Reply to Mr. J. A. Haldane.....	189
"The Word Made Flesh" .....	192
On the Lavers of Solomon's Temple.....	193
Letter of the late Rev. Mr. V—on the Person and Atonement of Christ.....	196
On the "Likeness of Sinful Flesh" .....	197
Extract from Dr. Southey's Colloquies .....	199
On Schism .....	201
On the term "Sinful" .....	216
On the received Interpretation of the fifth and sixth Trumpets, and the "River Euphrates" .....	221
Bradford (the Martyr) on the Renovation of all Things.....	224
On the Seventh Vial of the Apocalypse .....	225
To Correspondents.....	232, 719, 956
Jesus of Nazareth the King of Glory .....	233
Commentary on the Epistles to the Seven Apocalyptic Churches .....	256, 510, 754
Essays on the Song of Solomon.....	273
On the Heresy of Hymeneus and Philetus concerning the First Resurrection .....	329
On the Relation which the Bible bears to other Institutions of the Christian Religion.....	352
On the a Parable of the Ten Virgins.....	364, 880
On the Intermediate State .....	369
Review of the Rev. J. B. Deane on the Worship of the Serpent.....	390
— of Rev. Dr. Pye Smith on the Principles of Interpretation as applied to the Prophecies of Holy Scripture .....	398, 719
Review of the Rev. Joseph Fletcher on the Attention due to unfulfilled Prophecies.....	414
Review of the late Joseph Milne on the Millennium, &c.....	419
On the secondary Causes which influence the Character of Controversial Writings, illustrated by recent Examples .....	428
Review of the Rev. S. R. Maitland on the 1260 Days .....	448
Letter of the late Mr. Fletcher of Madeley.....	462
On calumnious Misquotations .....	476
On Antichrist, its Nature and Time.....	477
On the future Purpose of God toward the Gentiles of Present Dispensation .....	491
Messiah's Reign on the Earth .....	519
On the Number of the Beast.....	563
Forms of Evil in the Church.....	564
On the Names of God.....	565
On the Epiphany of our Lord Jesus Christ; and the Gathering of his Elect .....	597
On the Divine Will .....	594
The Out-pouring of the Holy Spirit.....	608
The Antichrist, or Apostasy, of 1830.....	622
The Church, with her Endowment of Holiness and Power.....	630
On the Temple of Ezekiel .....	669

*-Appendix A-*  
**Contents of *The Morning Watch***

Review of Vaughan on the Papal Apostasy .....	681
—of Faber's Sacred Calender of Prophecy .....	706
On the Numbers in Daniel .....	713
Letter from a Hebrew Friend .....	715
The Bible with a New Orthography of principle Names .....	719
The Perils of the Church, and the Judgement of the Nations .....	721
Jewish Comment on Genesis xv. 9.....	804
On the Names of Christ.....	806
On the only justifiable Ground of separating from a Church.....	817
The Duty of Prophets.....	834
On the Reality of bearing the Cross of Christ.....	843
On the Gifts of the Holy Ghost commonly called Supernatural .....	850
On the extraordinary Manifestations in Port-Glasgow .....	869
Remarks on the Jubilean Period.....	874
On the Parable of the Marriage Supper.....	875
On the Religious and Prophetic Aspect of the French Revolution of 1830 .....	881
Criteria for determining in which Version of the Holy Scriptures the original Hebrew	
Computation of Time is contained: by J. Cullimore, Esq. ....	898
On Religious Periodicals.....	918
Review of the Rev. Joseph Duncan on the Humanity of Christ.....	928
On the God and Evil of Religious Societies.....	933
Doctrine and Learning of the chief Organs of the "Religious World" .....	944
Index.....	957

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☛ The Binder will cause the Plate of the Laver in Solomon's Temple to face p. 193; and the Plan of Ezekiel's Temple to face p. 669

## *THE MORNING WATCH*

### Contents of Volume III—March-June 1831

---

Prophetic Aspect of the Church; its Privileges and Powers .....	I
Commentary on the Epistles to the Seven Apocalyptic Churches .....	15, 261
Interpretation of all the Old-Testament Prophecies quoted in the New Testament .....	35, 291
Notes on the Parables of our Lord respecting the Judgment .....	67
The King of Sheshach .....	76
On the Names of Christ .....	81
On the Human Nature of Christ .....	112
Miracles, Signs, Powers .....	138
Criteria for determining in which Version of the Holy Scriptures the original Hebrew	
Computation of Time is contained: by J. Cullimore, Esq. ....	161, 503
Progress of Judgements on England and Holland .....	191
Of Miraculous Powers in the Church .....	206
Tertullian on the Humanity of our Lord .....	226
Reply to a Letter on the Review of Maitland .....	236
Reply to Mr. Vaughan, Author of "the Nature and Duration of the Papal Apostasy" reviewed in No.	
VII .....	246
Declaration from the Scotch Church, Regent Square .....	247
To Correspondents .....	248, 504
The People of God, in ancient, present, and future Time .....	249
On the Interpretations of our Lord's Parables .....	315
On the Restoration and Conversion of the twelve Tribes .....	324
Jesus the Head over all Things to his Church .....	329
Calvinism not the whole of Christianity .....	369
Jesus the Christ, the Son of the Living God: Observations on Matt. xvi-xxii .....	383
On the Hebrew and Septuagint Chronology of the Post-diluvian Periods, in Reply to Mr. Cullimore:	
by Wm. Cuninghame, Esq. ....	416
On the Number of the Beast, 666 .....	440
Review of Dr. Whately's "Errors of Romanism" .....	442
Review of Mr. Harness's Two Sermons on Schism .....	449
On the Structure of the Apocalypse, and the Events of the Sixth and Seventh Vials .....	465
On the Gifts of the Holy Ghost, commonly called Supernatural .....	473
Review of an anonymous Tract on Scriptural Periods .....	496
Addenda and Corrigenda to Mr. Cullimore's papers on Chronology .....	503

## *THE MORNING WATCH*

### Contents of Volume IV—September & December 1831

---

There remaineth a Rest to the People of God.....	I, 128
Commentary on the Epistles to the Seven Apocalyptic Churches.....	23, 255
Interpretation of all the Old-Testament Prophecies quoted in the New Testament.....	52, 294
On the Gifts of the Holy Ghost, commonly called Supernatural.....	84
Ernesti on the Gift of Tongues.....	101
The Nature and Extent of the Evil of Sin.....	117
Professor Lee on the Sabbath.....	128
Jesus the Head over all Things to his Church.....	129
English Revolution of 1831.....	161
Mssrs. Campbell, Scott, and Maclean, versus the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.....	179
Reply to the Attack of the Edinburgh Review on the Morning Watch.....	194
Particulars of a few recent Cases of Healing.....	215, 474
Review of Professor Lee on the Apocalypse.....	227
The Record Newspaper and the Christian Observer.....	234
To Correspondents.....	237, 481
God Shall be All in all.....	239
The Hour of Christ's Appearance.....	251
On the Restoration and Conversion of the Tribes of Israel.....	294
The Church's Expectation.....	317
On the Unity of the Church.....	327
Interpretation of the Parable of the Marriage Feast.....	340
Testimony of the Fathers to the Gifts of the Spirit.....	355
On the "Meat in due Season".....	363
Abuse of Spiritual Gifts.....	375
Mr. Cullimore on Scripture Chronology: Part II. ....	403
Progress of the English Revolution.....	439
Review of Dods on the Incarnation of the Eternal Word.....	447
Social Duties on Christian Principles.....	461
History of the present manifestation of Spiritual Gifts.....	469

# *THE MORNING WATCH*

## Contents of Volume V—March & June 1832

---

Christ the Morning Star; and Lucifer Son of the Morning.....	I
Commentary on the Epistles to the Seven Apocalyptic churches (concluded).....	17
The Fall of Babylon.....	50
The Mystery of Speaking in Tongues .....	78
a Judgement upon the Decision of the last General Assembly .....	84
Christ's Kingdom on Earth.....	115
No Gifts, no perfect Church .....	132
Spiritual Gifts and Demoniical Possessions.....	145
Review of Faber's Sacred Calender of Prophecy .....	161
Mr. Irving's church and the Record Newspaper.....	179
Review of Greenwood's "latest Heresy" .....	203
Miraculous Cures of Mary Maillard (concluded); of Charlotte Charisere; of Miss Sadler; of Elizabeth Sawdy; and Anne Greenwood .....	209-222
Ceremonies in the Time of Henry VII. on the Curing the King's Evil .....	225
Extract from Locke on the First Resurrection .....	227
Answer to Mr. McCaul's Reply to Morning Watch.....	229
To Correspondents.....	229, 456
Letters of the Rev. Joseph Wolff.....	233
The Tabernacle of god with Men; and the Feast of Tabernacles .....	235
On the Sacred Numbers .....	273
Unaccomplished Prophecies now fulfilling .....	287
The Voice of God .....	297
Interpretation of the fourteenth Chapter of the Apocalypse.....	306
----- of Daniel's Seventy Weeks.....	325
Prophets and Apostles .....	332
A Literal Translation of the Opening of the Sealed Book (a Table).....	339
The "Little Season" (a Table).....	347
Explanation of the foregoing Tables of the Sealed Book and Little Season .....	355
Present State of Prophetic Knowledge.....	357
Thoughts, Moral and Diving, touching God's Method and Order of revealing Himself.....	383
English Revolution of 1832 .....	395
Review of "The Doctrines of Spiritual Gifts," by a Clergyman.....	404
Visions—Miraculous Cures—Cholera.....	416
Review of the Rev. H. M'Neile on Spiritual Gifts .....	430
The Ark of God in the Temple of Dagon—Mr. Irving's Church and the London Presbytery.....	441

# *THE MORNING WATCH*

## Contents of Volume VI—September & December 1832

---

On the Songs of Heaven .....	I
Interpretation of the fourteenth Chapter of the Apocalypse—(continued from Vol. V.p.325).18, 162	
Germinant Fulfilment of Prophecies .....	45
Discourse in 1785, on the future State of the Church, by M. De Noè, Bishop of Troyes .....	49
The Book of the Church .....	81
Jesus our Ensamle, that we should follow his steps.....	103, 309
Analysis or Argument of the Epistle to the Romans.....	117, 321
"The Babe of Glory," &c. (A Work published in the seventeenth Century) .....	128
What, and where, is the Church .....	135
No Gifts, no Love.....	144
What of the Night? .....	154
On the Ancient Chaldean and Egyptian Chronology .....	161
Records of the Religion and Science of Babylon.....	181
Review of "The general Delusion of Christians touching the Ways of God's revealing Himself," an anonymous Treatise, first published in 1713 .....	212
—of "The Christian Dispensation Miraculous;" by the Rev. T. Boys.....	216
—of "The Doctrine of miraculous Interference of Jesus in Behalf of Believers;" by H.B. Bulteel ....	220
—of "An Inquiry concerning Spiritual Gifts;" by the Rev. W. W. Pym .....	222
—of "A Word of Testimony; or corrected Account of the Evidence" and "Defense" in the Trial of the Rev. Edwards. Irving before the Presbytery of London .....	224
Mr. Irving's Church the Sign of the Times.....	224
To correspondents .....	228, 452
The Language of Heaven .....	229
Unaccomplished Prophecies now fulfilling: No. III.....	245
Protestant Apostasy .....	254
On the Judgement before the Great White Throne.....	286
Moab, Edom, and Ammon.....	290
Commentary on Genesis III .....	292
Advice to Pastors .....	326
Satanic Agency .....	333
On the Return of the Jews.....	351
The Powers of the Church.....	357
On the Baptism of Infants .....	362
On the Hermaic Records .....	389
Records of Babylon and Egypt.....	405
Review of the Hon. And Rev. B. W. Noel and Rev. T. Boys on Miraculous Powers.....	417
The Responsibility of a Baptized Man, of a Preacher of the Gospel, and of a Pastor in Christ's Flock, to Christ and the Church .....	430
The Record Newspaper.....	450

☞ The Binder will place the Tabular View of the Relative Antiquity of the several Classes of Brick Almanacks found in the Ruins of Babylon to face page 405.



# *The Morning Watch*

## Contents of Volume VII—March & June 1833

---

The Glory of God in the Land of the Living.....	I
Unaccomplished Prophecies now fulfilling: .....	
No. IV .....	33
No. V .....	39
No. VI .....	235
No. VII.....	240
The Bride, the Lamb's Wife.....	44
On the Prophetical Aspect of all God's Works and Ways—I. The Creation of Man.....	52
Arrows against Babylon .....	73
Christ in us the Hope of Glory .....	87
Lectures on certain Passages of our Lord's Life and Ministry—I. The Casting out of Legion .....	107
What caused Mr. Baxter's Fall (see p. 391).....	129
The Alphabet of Prophecy .....	140
Of the Chinese Sexagenary Cycle and Astronomical System of Time, and of the Authenticity of the early History of China .....	161
Church Reform.....	177
Review of Irving's Day of Pentecost.....	186
—of Tracts connected with recent Manifestations .....	189
—of Visit to the West of Scotland.....	191
—of Testimony of Facts concerning Continuation of Miracles .....	ibid.
—of Doctrine of Baptism with the Holy Ghost.....	193
—of Have ye received the Holy Ghost.....	195
—of Try the Spirits.....	ibid.
—of Song of Solomon Interpreted .....	198
—of Sermons by Rev. E. Irving and Rev. N. Armstrong .....	ibid.
—of A Word of Inquiry.....	199
—of Rev. H. J. Owen on the Prayer of Faith connected with the Healing of the Sick.....	200
—of Mr. Baxter's Narrative of Facts .....	201
On the Chaldean and Oriental Zodiacs.....	208
On the Lord's Supper .....	220
Recent Letter from the Rev. Joseph Wolff .....	222
To Correspondents.....	ibid.
The Church of the First-born enrolled in Heaven.....	223
God Manifest in Christ .....	303
The Christian Church.....	330
On the various Ways of God's manifesting Himself to Man .....	346
On the Arrow-headed Characters of Nineveh and Babylon .....	365
On the Origin of the primitive Sphere for the Greeks.....	385
Mr. Baxter's "Narrative of Facts" .....	391
Conclusion of the Morning Watch.....	399

## B. Edward Irving/ *The Morning Watch* Chronology

Events in the Life of Edward Irving	Dates	Important Events in Britain and Europe
	1815	Corn Laws
	June 1815	Battle of Waterloo. Following Napoleonic Wars, severe economic depressions, including price drops and unemployment strike Britain
	Sept. 1815	Holy Alliance Established between Orthodox Russia, Catholic Austria, and Protestant Prussia
	August 1819	Peterloo Massacre, Manchester
Irving inducted as ordained minister, Caldonian Chapel, London.	16 Oct. 1822	1821-29 Greek wars of liberation
Irving marries Miss Isabella Martin, of Kirkcaldy	13 Oct. 1823	1824 Legal recognition of trade unions in Britain
Son Edward is born	22 July 1824	
Irving meets Mr. Hatley Frere, being deeply influenced by his prophetic interpretations of Scripture.	Early 1825	May 17 1825 A Roman Catholic Relief Bill to give Catholics in Britain full parliamentary rights, moved by the radical Member of Parliament Francis Burdett, is rejected by the House of Lords on its second reading
Daughter Margaret is born.	2 Oct. 1825	
Son Edward dies of Whooping Cough at 15 mos. Old.	11 Oct. 1825	
Irving comes across the Spanish work <i>The Coming of the Messiah in Glory and Majesty</i> , by Juan Josafat Ben-Ezra.	Early 1826	
Irving labours to translate <i>The Coming of the Messiah in Glory and Majesty</i> , by Juan Josafat Ben-Ezra.	Sum. 1826	
First Meeting of "Prophetic Parliament," Drummond's Albury Park Manor, Surrey.	Advent 1826	
Translation of <i>Ben-Ezra</i> completed	Jan. 1827	1827 Treaty of London. England, France, and Russia support Greek autonomy.
New church at Regent Square completed. Congregation moves in with Dr. Chalmers officiating.	11 May 1827	
Daughter Mary born.	Spring	

*Appendix B*  
Chronology-Edward Irving and *The Morning Watch*

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	1827		
Rev. Henry Cole comes to hear Irving preach, confronting him on his doctrine Christ following the service.	28 Nov. 1827		
Daughter Mary dies.	Dec. 1827		
		1828	Repeal of the Test Acts
Preaching tour of Scotland, coinciding with the meeting of the General Assembly; popularly received by very large crowds. Perhaps the zenith of his career.	May 1828		
Albury Prophetic Conference meets at Henry Drummond's estate. Chief outcome is the decision to publish the <i>Morning Watch</i> , a quarterly prophetic and theological journal.	Dec. 1828		
Second preaching tour of Scotland. It does not come near to the success of the previous year: no pastor allowed him to use his pulpit, more criticism, and smaller crowds.	May 1829	1829	Catholic Emancipation
"First steps of ecclesiastical persecution taken against Mr MacLean."	March 1830	1830	July Revolution in France Uprising in Brussels; bombardment of Antwerp; Belgium declares independence
Miss Marry Campbell speaks in tongues and is healed of consumption (?) some days later.	28 Mar. 1830		
Prophecy meeting at Albury Park; Irving stays until July 3.	1 July 1830		
Son Samuel dies after long sickness.	6 July 1830		
Last meeting between Irving and Chalmers. Chalmers increasingly concerned and voices this to Irving more than anytime previously	October 1830	Nov. 1830	
Mrs. Cardale spoke in tongues and prophesied at her home in London. This is followed a few days latter by Miss Hall who attended Irving's Services.	30 April 1831		
First direct authoritative censure pronounced on Irving by the General Assembly then meeting. Assembly instructs any presbytery in Scotland in which Irving might try to preach to put him on trial for heresy regarding "the sinful substance of Christ."	May 1831		
First mention that tongues and prophecy had occurred at Regent Square Church, in letter to Mr. Story. This was not to manifest itself publicly for four more months	July 1831		
Miss Hall speaks in tongues in the vestry	Sunday,		

*Appendix B*  
**Chronology-Edward Irving and *The Morning Watch***

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during the Sunday morning service. That evening the church is filled with the regular attendees and the curious.	30 Oct. 1831		
		1832	I <sup>st</sup> Reform Bill
Trustees of Regent Square Church ask Presbytery to receive their complaint against Irving.	17 Mar. 1832		
Irving's trial before London Presbytery begins.	26 April, 1832		
After three days' hearing, Irving is found guilty and ordered removed from his church.	Wed. 2 May 1832		
Irving finds himself locked out of his church.	Friday 4 May, 1832		
Catholic Apostolic Church calls the first of its twelve apostles.	7 November 1833	1833	First Factory Act Abolition of Slavery
Presbytery of Annan finds Irving guilty of heresy and removes him from its membership and ministry.	13 March 1833		
Irving is ordained "Angel" (pastor) of London congregation.	Friday 5 April, 1833		
Son Ebenezer dies in infancy.	23 April, 1833		
<i>Morning Watch</i> concludes publication.	June 1833		
Irving dies in Glasgow at the age of 42.	7 Dec., 1834		

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### Bibliography Index :

- |                              |                                      |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1) <i>The Morning Watch</i>  | 4) Secondary sources                 |
| 2) Edward Irving             | <i>Historical studies</i>            |
| <i>Primary sources</i>       | <i>Apocalyptic &amp; Eschatology</i> |
| <i>Secondary sources</i>     | <i>Millennialism</i>                 |
| 3) Works "Contemporary" with | <i>Systematic Theology/Dogmatics</i> |
| <i>The Morning Watch</i>     | <i>Holy Spirit and Charismata</i>    |
|                              | <i>Hermeneutics</i>                  |
|                              | <i>Miscellaneous</i>                 |
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## *Index*

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## A

*A Compleat History or Survey of all the Dispensations*..... 131  
*A Narrative of Facts*.. 210, 211, 226, 266  
*A Plaine Discussion of the Whole Revelation of St. John*..... 37  
*Actes and Monuments*..... 37  
 adventist teleology ..... 152, 187, 239, 240, 241, 245  
 Albury Circle  
   attrition ..... 208–12  
   self-perception..... 239  
 Albury Conferences founded ..... 50–55  
 Alexandrian School..... 65, 89  
 allegorical interpretation..... 89, 111  
 allegory..... 69, 89  
 amillennialism..... 33, 37, 120  
 Annan ..... 200, 216  
 anthropology..... 149  
 Antichrist, the..... 4, 10, 13, 35, 40, 41, 42, 68, 73, 102, 107, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 121, 125, 145, 157, 175, 207, 219, 239, 270, 273, 277, 280  
 Antichristian spirit..... See spirit of the age  
 Apocalypse, the.. See Revelation (Book of)  
 Apollinarius..... 224  
 apostasy..... 38, 42, 50, 54, 79, 100, 108, 109, 110, 112, 121, 124, 125, 126, 134, 137, 152, 179, 181, 190, 192, 193, 204, 214  
 apostasy of Rome..... 38, 45, 193  
 apostolic church..... See primitivism  
 Arnold, Thomas ..... 10, 108, 122, 143, 167, 200, 224  
 atonement, doctrine of..... 124, 140, 141, 142, 167, 173  
 Augustine..... 32, 33, 34, 61, 65, 102, 130, 131, 274

## B

*Babylon and Infidelity Foredoomed* 47, 57  
 Babylonian zodiacs..... 87, 238  
 Balfour Declaration, the..... 40, 222, 283

baptism in the Holy Spirit ..... 79, 169  
 baptism sermons, Irving's ..... 162–64, 175, 178, 183, 223  
 Barkun, Michael ..... 18, 272  
 Barth, Karl ..... 144, 221, 231, 241, 249, 272, 280  
 Baumgartner, Frederic J. .... 15, 273  
 Baxter, Robert..... 94, 97, 102, 116, 132, 146, 147, 174, 210, 212, 218, 226, 266  
 Beckett, Rev. G. .... 51  
 Belisarius..... 38  
 Ben Ezra..... See Lacunza, Manuel  
 Bentham, Jeremy (Jerry)..... 8, 122  
 Berkley, George..... 60  
 Bicheno, James..... 40, 41, 42, 43, 266  
 Bickersteth, Edward..... 45  
 Borthwick, Mr. T..... 51, 67, 84  
 Bourbon Monarchy..... 23  
 Bourignon, Antonia ..... 191  
 Bourignonism..... 191  
 Brethren..... See Plymouth Brethren  
 Britain..... 8, 10, 12, 20, 23, 24, 37, 40, 41, 45, 46, 48, 54, 56, 59, 108, 109, 110, 112, 113, 118, 120, 122, 209, 211, 218, 221, 222, 251, 266, 273, 279  
 Brunner, Emil..... 83, 105, 274  
 Bryan, Rev. W. .... 51  
 Burder, Rev. H. F. .... 51

## C

Caird, Mary..... 212  
 Calvin, John..... 44, 61, 80, 81, 118, 145, 236, 274, 282  
 Calvinism ..... 53, 124, 141, 167, 205  
 Campbell, Mary..... 169, 170, 171, 174  
 Canning, George..... 8  
 capitalism..... 8, 56, 87, 122, 230  
 Cardale, J. B..... 171, 199, 216, 217  
 Cardale, Miss Emily..... 174, 212  
 Cardale, Mrs ..... 174  
 Carlyle, Thomas ..... 44, 219, 267  
 Catholic Apostolic Church..... 10, 51, 171, 208, 209, 212, 218, 221, 276  
 Catholic Relief Act..... 122  
 cessationist..... 163, 168, 180, 190  
 Chalmers, Thomas..... 92, 162, 166, 170, 227

Chevalier, T. W..... 45, 51, 116, 267  
 Christendom. 4, 9, 38, 48, 49, 53, 88, 93,  
 107, 110, 111, 113, 123, 125, 132,  
 134, 136, 154, 155, 156, 192, 196,  
 235  
 Christological issues covered in the  
 Morning Watch..... 164  
 Christology  
 Arian Christology of Joseph Priestly. 40  
 Christological controversies .... 148, 152,  
 166, 176, 178, 204, 226  
 Docetic Christology and charismata....  
 183–89  
 Docetic Christology of premillennialism  
 ..... 142–52, 159  
 Doceticism of modernity ..... 147–48  
 Irving's Christology.. 9, 11, 85, 86, 115,  
 128, 142–52, 158, 159, 163, 167,  
 178, 179, 197, 199, 221, 223, 224,  
 240  
 Chrysostom ..... 227  
 church age..... 35, 79, 137, 138, 149,  
 209, 221  
 Code of Justinian ..... 38  
 Cohn, Norman ..... 18, 22, 28, 34,  
 35, 36, 107, 125, 275  
 Cole, Rev. T. W..... 51  
 Coleridge, Samuel Taylor... 8, 24, 47, 192,  
 203, 228  
 Coleridge, S. T..... 24  
*Coming of the Messiah in Glory* ..... 49  
 Continental Society ..... 44, 47, 51  
 Council of Ephesus..... 33  
 Creation Sabbath..... 244  
 Cult of Reason..... 38  
 Cuninghame, William (of Lainshaw) 45,  
 74, 116, 211, 268

## D

Daniel (Book of)..... 10, 28, 29, 30,  
 31, 32, 34, 38, 57, 110, 130, 137, 218,  
 275, 281  
 Danielic, understanding of history ..... 129  
 Darby, John Nelson... 9, 12, 42, 129, 137  
 day of the Lord..... 79, 123, 156  
 democracy ..... 8, 41, 45, 56, 87, 110,  
 111, 113, 230, 252  
*Dialogues on Prophecy*..... 52

dispensation of the Gentiles..... 132, 138,  
 149, 183  
 Dispensationalism 19, 102, 129, 131, 137,  
 153  
 dispensations (in history)..... 36, 48, 49,  
 129–32, 138, 145, 146, 152, 186  
 Docetism/docetic..... 138, 147, 148,  
 186, 225  
 Dodsworth, Rev. W. .... 51  
 Dow, David (of Irongray)..... 51, 217  
 Drummond, A. L. .... 8, 44, 135, 167,  
 171, 174, 191, 192, 209, 210, 216,  
 218, 219, 265  
 Drummond, Henry..... 2, 44, 45, 44–45,  
 51, 52, 53, 56, 75, 104, 209, 212, 216,  
 217, 218, 268  
 Dundas, Henry (Viscount Melville)..... 44

## E

ecclesiology, Albury's..... 132–40  
 economic Trinity..... 151  
 Edwards, John..... 131  
 Eichhorn, Johann Gottfried..... 60  
 England..... 10, 13, 15, 22, 24, 34,  
 37, 40, 42, 44, 51, 60, 78, 88, 108,  
 113, 124, 171, 201, 206, 209, 210,  
 266, 270, 275, 277, 278, 285  
 Enlightenment ..... 16, 58, 83, 84, 112,  
 231, 272  
 epistemology ..... 3, 23  
 eschatology verses teleology ..... 239–46  
 eschatology, Reformed..... 144, 242, 246  
 Europe..... 23, 40, 54, 56, 59, 78,  
 87, 110, 112, 130, 251, 271  
 Eutyches..... 9, 224  
 Evangelicalism  
 Evangelical use of prophecy ..... 114–15,  
 122  
 optimism of ..... 121  
 Ezekiel (Book of)..... 28, 29, 236

## F

Faber, George Stanley..... 42, 211, 269  
 Fancourt, Miss Elizabeth..... 172  
 Faupel, William..... 14, 176, 221, 276  
 Feast of Tabernacles..... 79, 140  
 Fidus



pseudonymous writer..... 71, III,  
156, 179, 245  
Flegg, Columba Graham..... 51, 208,  
209, 276  
foundationalism..... 59, 82, 87, 159, 246  
Foundationalist Myth..... 250  
foundationalist quest..... 62  
Foxy, John..... 37, 276  
France..... 15, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 48,  
78, 109, 110, III, 112, 113, 266, 277  
*Frasers Magazine*..... 164, 169, 171  
Frei, Hans..... 24, 25, 65, 66, 276  
French Revolution..... 2, 12, 15, 23, 30,  
37, 38, 39, 40, 42, 43, 46, 49, 53, 62,  
79, 93, 96, 109, 110, III, 112, 114,  
120, 122, 125, 130, 134, 154, 218,  
229, 277  
Frere, James Hatley..... 45, 46, 47, 51,  
57, 116, 203, 211, 218, 223, 268  
Froom, L. E..... 15, 38  
Fundamentalism..... 12, 153, 280

## G

Garrett, Clarke..... 15, 277  
General Assembly, Church of Scotland... 4,  
116, 166, 173, 190, 191, 192, 198,  
204, 205, 207, 216  
Germany..... 60, 112  
gift of prophecy..... 186  
gifts of power..... 115, 130, 163,  
164, 167, 168, 172, 184, 213, 240  
gifts of the Spirit... 25, 86, 132, 165, 175,  
177, 181, 183, 184, 186, 207, 239  
gifts of the Spirit and preaching... 165–66  
Gladstone, W. E..... 8  
glossolalia..... 165, 174, 198  
Gog..... 28  
Gomorra..... 45, 79  
Gordon Riots..... 108  
grand narrative theory..... 2, 57, 66, 71,  
72–75, 89, 98, 159  
great tribulation, the..... 19, 27, 50, 54,  
97, 140, 142, 149, 150, 153, 156, 157,  
195, 206  
Gunton, Colin..... 12, 142, 224, 277

## H

Harrison, J. F. C..... 15, 23, 47, 264

Hawtreys, Rev. C..... 51  
Hawtreys, Rev. J. .... 51  
healing ..... 161, 187, 249  
Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich.. 60, 129  
hermeneutics  
    and unified narrative theory ..... 72–75  
    literal-typical ..... 64  
    literal-typical methodology ..... 72  
    power of over dogma..... 158–60  
Hierocracy and restorationism..... 212–16  
Hill, Christopher..... 13, 222, 277  
Hillary, Bishop of Poitiers ..... 107  
Hippolytus ..... 31  
historicism..... 62, 72, 128, 132, 151,  
234, 243, 246  
historicist revelation ..... 4, 104  
Hitler, Adolph..... 35, 130  
Hofstadter, Richard..... 19  
Hooper, Rev. J..... 51, 157, 230, 279  
Horsley, Samuel ..... 10, 41, 270

## I

idealism 26, 65, 147, 148, 149, 188, 226,  
227, 231  
idealism, premillennial ..... 147, 151,  
164, 185, 186, 189  
idealist anthropology..... 149  
immanent Trinity..... 151, 232  
imminent adventism ..... 48, 143, 164,  
223, 224, 236  
inspiration  
    and literal-typical hermeneutic ... 69–72  
    and revelation..... 58–69  
    unified narrative theory..... 72–75  
inspiration and literal interpretation 63–72  
inspiration of the Bible..... 58–63  
Irenaeus ..... 31, 32, 33, 130  
Irving, Edward..... 2, 8–10, 44, 45,  
46–48, 90, 109, 116, 134, 153, 162,  
169, 175, 192, 202, 206, 217, 219, 227,  
235  
    and Mcleod Campbell ..... 168  
    and pretribulation rapture ..... 152–58  
    and revival of the church..... 119  
    and Robert Baxter ..... 210–11  
apostasy of Britain..... 121  
baptism sermons ..... 162–64  
Ben-Ezra ..... 47–50, 133

Christological controversies .. 17, 115,  
 173, 176, 178  
 compulsive nature..... 228  
 criticism of Church of Scotland..... 216  
 criticism of Evangelicals. 120, 123, 190  
 criticism of the Church of Scotland 192  
 ecclesiology of..... 132–40  
 hermeneutic ..... 69–72, 86, 98,  
 117, 133  
 incarnational Christology..... 128, 168,  
 178  
 inspiration of Scripture..... 62  
 interpretation of prophecy..... 39, 69,  
 70, 91, 9297, 98, 165  
 introduction to prophecy..... 57  
 Irving and Drummond..... 44  
 manipulated by others ..... 217  
 middle course..... 229  
 on apostasy of Britain..... 112  
 on preaching ..... 181  
 on separating from the apostate  
     church..... 207  
 on spiritual gifts..... 124, 162, 165, 172,  
 177, 179, 209  
 originality and independence..... 227  
 preaching tour of Scotland..... 166–67  
 premillennial Christology..... 142–52  
 premillennial theologian... 97, 128, 134,  
 163, 179, 182, 209, 234, 235, 250  
 pride..... 228  
 proto-foundationalism ..... 86  
 revelation..... 100  
 sermons on baptism ..... 175, 178, 183  
 trial before Church of Scotland 191, 217  
 trial before London Presbytery 195–202,  
 205  
 Trinitarian theology..... 177  
 waning influence..... 212, 213, 214,  
 217, 218  
 Irving, Irving  
     hermeneutic ..... 77  
 Irving, Edward  
     Christological controversies ..... 85

## J

Jansenists..... 163  
 Jehovah..... 45, 151, 185, 186  
*Jewish Expositor*..... 43  
 Jews

failure of..... 79, 159  
 failure of Israel..... 136  
 restoration of 21, 28, 40, 41, 42, 43, 68,  
 79, 97, 100, 135, 153, 168, 176,  
 209, 211, 247  
 Joachim de Fiore..... 34, 35, 36, 107,  
 131, 280  
 Joel, prophecy of..... 165, 175, 176,  
 188, 214  
 Jubilee, year of ..... 79  
 Justin Martyr ..... 31, 61, 130

## K

King, Edward..... 38, 41, 270  
 King's College, London ..... 153

## L

Lacunza, Manuel..... 47, 48, 50, 52  
 Lamb, Charles ..... 8  
 Last Day's Pentecost ..... 4, 164  
 last days outpouring of the Spirit..... 165  
 last days' outpouring of the Spirit..... 165  
 Leach, Mr. W. .... 51  
*Les Trembleurs des Cevennes*..... 163  
 Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim.. 60, 231, 274  
 Lindsey, Hal..... 13  
 literalism ..... 69, 88  
 literal-typological methodology..... 69, 87  
 LSPCJ..... See The London Society for  
     Promoting Christianity among the Jews  
 Luther, Martin..... 36, 61, 80, 81,  
 96, 108, 203, 273

## M

Macdonald, George..... 167, 170, 271  
 Macdonald, James..... 167, 170  
 Maclean, Rev. Hugh B..... 4, 51, 173, 190  
 Magog ..... 28  
 Malden, Lieut. (son of Rev. T. W. Cole)  
     ..... 51  
 Mandeville, Lord (later Duke of  
     Manchester)..... 51  
 Mann, Hargreaves..... 201  
 Manuel, F. E. .... 129  
 Marsden, George M. .... 12, 247, 280, 287  
 Marsh, William (Millennial Marsh).. 45,  
 51, 96

Marx, Karl.....35,  
129  
material teleology..... 244  
McCormack, Bruce..... 249, 280  
McFarlane, Graham W. P.... 12, 142, 224,  
265, 280  
McLeod Campbell, John.... 136, 167, 168,  
173, 285  
McNeil, Hugh..... 218  
McNeile, Hugh... 51, 208, 209, 210, 211,  
212, 270  
Mede, Joseph..... 38, 42, 50, 76  
Melancthon, Philipp..... 108  
meliorist, understanding of history..... 129  
millennial kingdom.....20, 74, 75,  
76, 79, 81, 96, 103, 111, 114, 118,  
134, 137, 141, 142, 145, 146, 151,  
163, 164, 165, 172, 174, 179, 182,  
183, 185, 186, 188, 190, 195, 196,  
206, 207, 209, 213, 225, 229, 230,  
244, 245, 247  
millennium, the.....19, 20, 32, 53,  
137, 150, 179, 244  
modernity ..... 56, 58, 59, 63, 83, 87, 147,  
148, 246, 252  
Monophysite.....9, 86  
Montanism..... 32, 61  
Montanus .....31  
*Morning Watch* founded..... 50–55  
Murray, Iain H..... 10, 281

## N

Napier, John.....37, 271  
Napoleon..... 23, 38  
nascent Pentecostalism..... 14, 224  
National Scotch Church. See Regent Square  
Neologians .....60  
Nestorius ..... 9, 30, 224  
Newton, Isaac..... 10, 41, 93, 281  
Niagara Bible Conferences ..... 12, 46  
Nisbet, James .....7, 45, 53, 162, 209,  
210, 266, 268, 269, 270  
Noah..... 102, 124, 131  
Noel, The Rev. Baptist..... 174

## O

Oliver..... 13, 42, 43, 45, 46, 50,  
84, 110, 114, 130, 171, 211

Oliver, W. H. .... 10, 13, 15, 22  
*On the Antichristian Apostasy*..... 109  
Origin..... 238  
Ottoman Empire.....42  
Owen, Rev. H. J. (Minister of Park  
Chapel, Chelsea).....51

## P

Paine, Thomas.....23  
Papacy..30, 79, 107, 108, 109, 121, 125  
Papias .....31  
parenthesis..... See prophetic parenthesis  
parousia.....36  
Pentecostalism ..... 9, 13, 14, 143, 176,  
182, 221, 223, 224, 226  
penultimate type..... 131  
Perceval, Spenser ..... 44, 51, 174, 209  
perichoresis..... 151, 177, 223  
Phillips, Rev. G. W. ....51  
philosophy of history ..... 39, 92, 102–4,  
129, 131, 145, 159, 186, 196, 215,  
231, 233, 249  
Augustines.....32  
Plato ..... 61, 122, 282  
Platonism.....64  
plenary inspiration.....62  
Plymouth Brethren..... 12, 129  
pneumatology ..... 143, 162, 163, 168,  
179, 189, 197, 200  
Poiret, Pierre..... 131  
Pope Lucius III.....35  
Pope Pius VI.....38  
popish..... 236  
Popish Apostasy.....45  
Port Glasgow.. 4, 62, 166, 167, 169, 171,  
172, 175, 183  
postmillennial ..... 120  
postmillennialism.....20, 36, 130  
Powerscourt Conferences .....46  
*Practical View of the Redeemer's Advent*  
114  
premillennial hermeneutic.....57, 77, 87,  
121, 135, 136, 152, 153, 155, 230,  
239, 247, 251, 252  
premillennial ideal...147, 151, 159, 164,  
185, 186  
premillennial idealism ..... 149  
premillennial system..... 16, 17, 25, 36,  
50, 54, 59, 68, 81, 85, 86, 101, 102,

103, 105, 127, 136, 138, 159, 160,  
162, 173, 179, 204, 207, 234, 235,  
236, 237, 239, 249, 251  
premillennial worldview..... 15, 16,  
21, 47, 54, 57, 83, 123, 128, 149, 158,  
161, 189, 218, 221, 224  
premillennialism  
  and apocalypticism..... 18–22  
  pre-Albury..... 27–37  
  prominence of ..... 12–14  
Presbyterian..... 40, 51, 83, 89, 200, 279  
pretribulation rapture.....  
  See rapture, doctrine of  
Priestly, Joseph..... 11, 40, 42, 271  
primitivism..... 73, 166, 171, 188, 213,  
  212–16, 243  
Princeton ..... 69, 83, 84, 228  
Probyn, Rev. W. .... 51  
prophecy  
  and history.. 29, 39, 71, 103, 110, 127  
  as object of faith ..... 83, 100, 116, 141  
  as polemical device..... 21, 22, 56, 60,  
    80, 83–85, 86, 113, 186  
  centrality of..... 50, 62, 83, 92–98,  
    116, 122, 159, 247  
  certitude of ..... 80  
  double sense of. See hermeneutics, literal-  
    typical  
  interpretation of..... 33, 34, 38, 70,  
    72, 209  
  interpretation of..... 29, 39, 46, 49, 100  
  malleable character of 88, 89, 105, 235  
  psychological use ..... 21, 90, 118, 251  
Prophecy Investigation Society ..... 45  
prophetic parenthesis ..... 137, 138  
prophetic scholasticism..... 247  
proto-foundationalism.....  
  See foundationalism  
Puritanism ..... 13, 36

## R

rapture, doctrine of..... 9, 19, 79, 135,  
  140, 149, 152–58, 159  
  in Ben Ezra..... 49, 50  
rapture, rapture of..... 179, 195  
rationalism 9, 16, 23, 24, 57, 86, 105, 252  
Reagan, Ronald Wilson (President)... 222  
reason..... 24, 58, 86, 99, 181, 235  
Reeves, Marjorie..... 34, 35, 36, 107, 283

Reformation..... 24, 36, 53, 80, 81,  
  107, 108, 118, 134, 135, 188, 281  
Reformed eschatology..... 144, 242, 246  
Reformed theology..... 144, 232, 233,  
  242, 246, 248  
Reformed tradition.....  
  See Reformed theology  
Regent Square..... 9, 11, 12, 14,  
  17, 112, 132, 138, 142, 162, 167, 173,  
  174, 189, 190, 196, 197, 198, 199,  
  200, 202, 205, 208, 209, 210, 212,  
  214, 218, 226, 239, 269  
Reign of Terrors ..... 110  
Relief Acts..... 108, 109  
*Remarks on the Signs of the Times*..... 41  
Research Institute of Systematic  
  Theology (King's College, London) 153  
restoration of Israel..... 21, 28, 40, 41,  
  42, 43, 68, 77, 79, 97, 100, 135, 153,  
  168, 176, 209, 211, 247  
restorationism ..... 214, 212–16, 221  
Revelation  
  and inspiration of the Bible..... 58–63  
  Doctrine of ..... 58, 59, 72, 83, 92,  
    213, 243  
  Ecstatic..... 182, 189  
  Historicist..... 71  
  Last days'..... 21, 28, 39, 75, 87,  
    92, 96, 109, 176  
  Progressive..... 26, 74, 85, 151, 159,  
    186, 229  
Revelation (Book of)..... 19, 30, 33, 34,  
  35, 38, 40, 53, 72, 81, 112, 130, 137,  
  146, 166, 175, 203, 252  
revival ..... 22, 50, 95, 96, 106, 113,  
  119, 120, 139, 171, 179, 205, 250,  
  251  
revivalist optimism..... 196  
revive the church.. 87, 95, 96, 120, 139,  
  193, 251  
Richard Coeur de Lion..... 35  
Roman Catholicism..... 53, 79, 107, 108,  
  130, 193  
Romantic epistemology ..... 23–27  
Romantic worldview ..... 25–27, 31, 159  
Romanticism..... 16, 23–27, 24, 25, 38,  
  94, 237, 246, 273, 283  
Romanticism and reason..... 24–25  
Ryrie, Charles 10, 69, 102, 103, 154, 157

## S

sabbatical, understanding of history.... 129  
 Saladin (as Antichrist).....35  
 sanctification..... 135, 150, 163, 183  
 Sandeen, Ernest .....8, 12, 15, 37, 38, 43,  
     46, 48, 51, 62, 63, 69, 83, 84, 192,  
     218  
 schism.....92, 93, 109, 205, 206, 205–8  
 Schleiermacher, Friedrich Daniel Ernst.60,  
     148, 283  
 science.....40, 68, 96, 105, 181, 203,  
     233, 235  
 Scofield Reference Bible..... 12  
 Scotland ..... 4, 16, 17, 51, 86, 116, 125,  
     139, 161, 162, 164, 165, 166, 167,  
     171, 173, 175, 176, 183, 189, 190,  
     191, 192, 193, 195, 197, 198, 200,  
     201, 202, 204, 206, 207, 208, 210,  
     216, 235, 239, 266  
*Scots Confession* ..... 135, 136  
 Scott, Alexander ..... 108, 167–69  
 Scott, Alexander J. ..118, 135, 167, 168,  
     191, 198  
 Sennacherib .....78  
 Shalmanezar .....78  
 Simon, Mr. E (Director of the Jew's  
     Asylum, London) .....51  
 Simons, Rev. J.....51  
 Sodom .....45, 79, 155  
 SPCK.....See The Society for Promoting  
     Christian Knowledge  
 spirit of the age.....109, 111, 112, 120,  
     124, 183, 196  
 spiritual gifts and Docetic Christology ....  
     183–90  
 St. Andrew's, Edinburgh..... 166  
 St. Cuthbert's ..... 166  
 St. George Church, Bloomsbury.....46  
 St. John's Chapel, Bedford Row ..... 174  
 Stewart, James Haldane .....51, 114, 148,  
     162, 172, 175, 271, 283  
 Story, Robert (of Rosneath)..... 51, 167,  
     170, 171, 228  
 Strachan, Gordon.....143, 168, 183, 200,  
     221, 223  
 Strauss, David Friedrich .... 60, 147, 148,  
     284

Strutt, The Hon. J. J. (later Member of  
     Parliament, subsequently Lord Rayleigh)  
     .....51  
 subjectivism..... 24, 57, 65, 69, 80, 88,  
     89, 128, 132, 133, 237  
 Sullivan, Dr. Martin..... 153  
 Sumner, Mr. R.....51  
 symbolical interpretation..... 74, 88, 236,  
     237

## T

Taplin, Edward 171, 174, 199, 200, 212  
 Terrors, the .....37  
 Tertullian..... 31, 142  
*The Christian Observer*.. 114, 117, 122,  
     172  
 The Church of Scotland..... 192  
*The Church with Her Endowment of  
     Holiness and Power*..... 139, 149,  
     172, 178  
*The Coming of the Messiah in Glory and  
     Majesty*..... See Lacunza, Manuel  
*The Day of Pentecost*..... 200  
*The Geneva Bible*.....37  
 The London Society for Promoting  
     Christianity among the Jews.....43  
*The Morning Watch*  
     defense of Edward Irving... 202–4, 215  
 The Quest for the Historical Jesus..... 246  
*The Record*..... 51, 115  
*The Rights of Man*.....23  
*The Sealing Virtue of Baptism*..... 163  
*The Signs of the Times*.....40  
 The Society for Promoting Christian  
     Knowledge (SPCK)..... 118  
*The Times* (London newspaper)..... 175  
*The Times of the Gentiles* .....209  
*The Watchers and the Holy Ones*.....41  
*theologia gloriae*..... 142  
 Theophilus .....61  
 Third Reich..... 35, 130  
 Tiglath-pileser .....78  
 tongues (glossolalia)..... 11, 86, 135,  
     170, 174, 175, 181, 183, 184, 187,  
     189, 196, 197–98, 207, 214  
 Toronto Blessing..... 14  
 Torrance, Thomas .....80, 136, 167, 285  
 Tregelles, S. P..... 9, 10, 271  
 triadic, understanding of history..... 129

trinitarian.... 12, 141, 142, 151, 158, 163,  
176, 177, 180, 189, 223, 224, 230,  
231, 232

Trinity  
economic ..... 151  
immanent ..... 151

Trinity, the.... 35, 96, 131, 141, 151, 176,  
177, 232, 233, 242, 245, 286

tripartite dispensationalism of Joachim 131

Tudor, John ..... 31, 44, 45, 53, 56, 64,  
66, 81, 94, 95, 100, 101, 103, 109,  
111, 112, 113, 120, 135, 142, 146,  
151, 154, 156, 160, 211, 218, 219,  
237, 238, 242, 252

two-tiered spirituality ..... 182

type and antitype..... 72, 77, 80

types, examples of  
"drunkards of Ephraim..... 235  
"fat King Eglon" as type of  
Evangelicalism ..... 235  
Ammon as type of Presbyterians ..... 89  
apostasy of Rome as type  
of apostate English Protestantism 193  
Ark in temple of Dagon as type  
of Irving's trial..... 204  
Assyrian as persecuter of  
people of God..... 77  
coalition surrounding Sanballat  
as type of Evangelicalism..... 236  
creation sabbath as type of  
millennial kingdom..... 244  
Edom as type of Rome..... 79  
Egypt as type of England..... 88  
Egypt as type of France..... 78  
Elijah as type of rapture..... 79  
Israel as type of the church..... 133  
Jereboam's apostasy as type  
of Papacy..... 79  
Jesus as type of humanity..... 177, 178  
Jew in the flesh type of Christian  
in the Spirit..... 133  
Jewish war under Vespasian type  
of French Revolution..... 154  
kingdom of Moab as type of  
Evangelicalism ..... 235  
Moab as type of Evangelicalism ..... 88  
plagues as type of Evangelical  
apostasy..... 89  
restoration of Israel type of  
rapture..... 135

ten tribes under Jereboam type  
of Europe..... 78  
Tyre as type of England..... 78  
waters of Shiloah as type of  
gifts of the Holy Spirit ..... 79

## U

unified narrative..... See grand narrative theory  
Unitarian Society ..... 40

## V

Vaughan, Rev. E. T. (Vicar, St. Mary's,  
Leicester)..... 51

## W

Walker, Andrew... 12, 15, 95, 142, 196,  
221, 282, 286  
Warfield, B. B. .... 10, 228, 286  
Way, Lewis.... 40, 43, 147, 211, 276, 284  
Weber, Eugen ..... 15, 286  
Weber, Otto ..... 15, 19, 21, 61, 81, 83,  
90, 144, 239, 242, 244, 247, 248, 249,  
286  
Weinandy, Thomas G..... 233, 286  
*Weltanschauung*..... 18, 229  
Wesley, Charles ..... 176, 281  
Wesleyanism..... See Evangelicalism  
Westminster Confession..... 135  
*Westminster Review* ..... 122  
White, Rev. J. (Baker Street Chapel,  
London) ..... 51  
Wilberforce, William..... 8  
Wilson, Dwight..... 12, 13, 287  
Wolfe, R. jr. (Curate of Albury) ..... 51  
Wolfe, Rev. R. (Rector of Crawley)..... 51  
Wolff, Joseph ..... 43, 51  
Wolterstorff, N..... 87, 287  
Wordsworth, William ..... 8, 24, 38, 56  
worldview, premillennial.... See premillennial  
worldview  
worldview, Romantic ..... See Romantic  
worldview  
Wright, Tom..... 60, 281

## Z

Zionism..... 43, 222, 274

# THE UNVEILING

Hear the roaring at the rim of the world  
Se what every eye shall see  
Behold He's coming with the clouds  
Setting all the captives free  
And those who longed to see this day  
Will tremble with delight  
As a sea of upturned faces there  
is bathed in endless light

I am the Alpha and the Omega  
The One who is and was and is to come  
Though I was dead, now I'm alive forever  
Don't be afraid  
I hold the keys  
And I have come

Once the just and gentle victim  
Who it seemed was born to die  
See Him now, a blaze of glory  
As He moves across the sky  
And that majestic silhouette  
Who's come to take His bride  
Still bears the healing wounds  
Upon His hands and feet and side

I am the Alpha and the Omega  
The One who is and was and is to come  
Though I was dead, now I'm alive forever  
Don't be afraid  
I hold the keys  
And I have come

The great unveiling of hour hope  
The promised Jubilee  
The revelation of our God  
Its all we longed to see

I am the Alpha and the Omega  
The One who is and was and is to come  
Though I was dead, now I'm alive forever  
Don't be afraid  
I hold the keys  
And I have come

Michael Card, 1997

